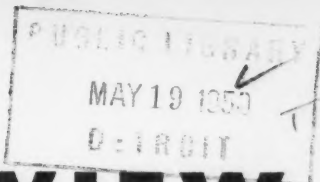


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THE MUSIC REVIEW



May 1950

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The Chansons of Antoine Busnois

BY

GEORGE PERLE

IN the absence of a genuine social and political basis for their existence, the rulers of Burgundy, "improvisation monstreuse d'une agrégation de provinces, qui n'eurent ni l'unité de races ni l'unité d'idées",¹ created an artificial world to which they were indispensable, a resplendent world of fantasy and ceremony. The projects of the ducal court required the services of many artists, writers and musicians, in whose education and achievements the dukes were personally interested. Molinet reports that Charles the Bold "recueilloit les plus fameux chantres du monde et entretenoit une chapelle estoffée de voix tant armonieuses et délectables que après la gloire céleste il n'estoit aultre liesse".² The most gifted of the musicians in the service of Charles was Antoine Busnois, from whom he had received instruction in counterpoint before his accession and who remained in the service of his daughter Mary after his death on the battlefield near Nancy in 1477. The chansons of Busnois were the most popular of their day and are found in greater number than those of any other composer in important late fifteenth century collections.

Artists as well as poets and musicians were employed in the preparation of these little song-books. A child-like fancy conceived the gaily-coloured initials which decorate their pages, wherein monkeys sit astride shells from which horned human heads emerge and plant-like creatures with two faces are supported in contorted efforts to shape a letter by little men holding forked poles. But if an extravagant imagination plays a large rôle in the pictorial aspect of the chansonnier, it has unfortunately no influence at all on the poetic, whose stereotyped form and content find their source in the conventionalized love poetry of the troubadour era. The first lines of the refrains of typical courtly lyrics suggest the amorous banalities of the commercial popular ballads of to-day: "The memory of you", "I sigh for you", "Only one kiss", "My one and only", etc. But there is nothing in our culture to compare with the ritual which framed these simple sentiments. Bel-Accueil, Dangier, Malebouche and other allegorical figures of the *Roman de la Rose* appear, and just as Machaut was inspired by his ideal lady Peronnelle, so Busnois has his Jaqueline d'Aqueville, whose name, concealed in an acrostic or pun, is found several times in his songs. There are other artifices, such as the incorporation of family mottoes and the use of rebuses. If there was little diversity in the content of these poems, there was even less in their formal patterns, which had degenerated into mere matrices for the mass production of rhymed verse. Even the tax collector found time to compose a couplet in reply to a certain musician's versified petition for remittance of his taxes.³

¹ Jules Michelet, *Louis XI et Charles le Temeraire*, 6th edition, Paris, 1869, p. iv.

² Otto Cartellieri, *The Court of Burgundy*, London, 1929, p. 157.

³ Cartellieri, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

That the lyrics did not inspire their musical settings, even when, as in the case of Busnois, poet and musician were one and the same, is evident at once; for the latter are one of the high points in the history of song writing and among the greatest secular achievements of mediaeval music. Neither the frivolous fantasy of the miniaturist nor the affectation of the poet are found here. Not the feigned melancholy of the text but the real pessimism of the period, which Huizinga has described so well in his book, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, finds expression in these lovely melodies.

The years between the accession of Philip the Good in 1419 and the death of his son in 1477 embrace a definite stylistic epoch, which in the secular field was not challenged by the rising Flemish school before the last decade of the century. Its origin lies in the reaction, under English and Italian influences, against the mannerism of the degenerated French *Ars Nova* of the late fourteenth century. In spite of the stature of the great Burgundian masters and the refined character of their idiom, it is impossible to speak of a mature Burgundian style, for the revolutionary techniques which these composers employed, the use of imitation and "rational" (as the older English writers would say) triadic harmony, were not permitted to develop to the point where they would impair the stratiform texture. We have come to associate these techniques with the Renaissance, since they are the means by which the Flemish school achieved the new homogeneous sound which characterizes the music of that period. But the sound ideal is a more appropriate basis for the determination of the fundamental character of a musical style than are its specific technical traits, and from this standpoint Burgundian music has more in common with the Gothic age.

The same external relationship to the text typical of mediaeval secular music continued to prevail, the Burgundians in this regard also looking more to the past than to the future. The musical structure was still dictated by that of the poem, invariably in one of the fixed forms, either a *rondeau* or a *bergerette*. Musical dissimilarities between the two forms are much more significant than literary. While the formal repetitions seem to be generally feasible in the *rondeaux* of Dufay and his generation, this is often not the case with the later composers, whose stronger urge toward a continuous polyphonic flow, obliterating the distinctions between the two sections, sometimes makes internal repetitions doubtful or even impossible. In the *bergerette*, however, the two sections are separated by distinct cadences which indicate that the traditional rendition (A B B A A) was desired. Busnois frequently sets the first part in a ternary and the second in a binary rhythm, the contrast between the two being additionally emphasized by the more homophonic style of the latter. Musical details are rarely suggested by the meaning of the text. A rare exception is found in Busnois' *Joie me fuit*, where a long pause at the word "cesse" interrupts the correspondence of each phrase to a single line of text. (As often happens in the late Italian madrigal, this literal musical description of a single word contradicts the full sense of the passage in which it is found, "Je ne cesse".)

In the great majority of cases only the superius is underlaid with text, a detail which in itself does not prove that the other parts are instrumental.

Other factors must be considered, such as range, distribution of rests and the relation of these to the text, imitative style, voice spacing. It is clear that there was no invariable practice. In general an instrumental rendition of the contratenor, whose function in relation to the other parts is occasionally indicated by the designation "*Concordans*", seems most suitable. The tenor, of a more uncertain disposition, has a closer affinity sometimes with one and sometimes with another of the two outer parts, and often compromises ingeniously between both of them. The inconclusive nature of these and other components of musical style are elements which contribute to the delicate charm of the idiom and the delight in variety of detail which composers of the period display.

Antoine Busnois, leading master of the second generation of Burgundian composers, can be fully understood only against this background. As in the case of his great Flemish contemporary, Ockeghem, there is a sharp distinction between sacred and secular production. The Burgundian traditions quite dominate the secular aspect of Ockeghem's art, while on the other hand Busnois' sacred works show that he was not uninfluenced by the newer spirit of the northern masters. His reference to himself as a pupil of Ockeghem's in the motet *In Hydraulis* is perhaps only a figurative acknowledgement of this influence. In any event, the Burgundian ideals prevailed with him, since by far the greater proportion of his output is in the secular field, while a parallel tendency toward specialization is shown in Ockeghem's greater interest in sacred composition. When one considers the enthusiasm of the older master, Dufay, for every branch of composition, one is tempted to deduce an analogy with the growing cleavage between the two styles. But the importance of extra-musical determinants must not be overlooked, for, unlike the serious composers of our day, these men were functionally integrated into their social environment.

One of the more obvious factors characterizing the two styles is the number of voice-parts employed in each, four-part writing being standard in sacred music and three-part in secular. About thirty chansons by Busnois are available in transcription, of which perhaps a fourth are in four parts, a proportion which is just the reverse of that which obtains for the dozen or so sacred works definitely attributable to him. If we were in a position to study Busnois' unpublished work we would probably find that he favoured three-part writing to an even greater extent than the modern editions indicate. The transcriptions of his four-part chansons are all (except for an excerpt in Pirro's *Histoire*⁴) derived from two Petrucci publications, the *Odhecaton* and *Canti C*, both of them highly unreliable in the present connection, when compared with the sources from which the attribution to him of the three-part pieces is drawn. All posthumous ascriptions should be verified if possible, in view of the notorious carelessness in these matters during the period. The *Odhecaton* names Busnois as the composer of two four-part chansons, *Je ne demande aultre de gré* and *Jay pris amours tout au rebours*. In the case of the first we have corroborative

⁴ André Pirro, *Histoire de la musique de la fin du XIVe siècle à la fin du XVIe*, Paris, 1940, p.

evidence from several independent sources, but the second piece is not found elsewhere so we are less certain. Hewitt claims two more four-part chansons, anonymous in the *Odhecaton*, for Busnois, while Kiesewetter gives us three transcriptions from *Canti C*.

In general, Busnois' four-part chansons lack the grace and ease of the three-part. In two of the pieces (*Corps digne-Dieu quel mariage* and *Mon mignault-Gratieuse*) the inner voices are in canon throughout, a third one (*Maintes femmes*) has a sustained rhythmic *ostinato* for a tenor, while in two others chanson melodies of other composers are borrowed (*Jay pris amour tout au rebours*⁵ and *De tous biens*⁶). Dependence on these artifices, not found in the three-part pieces,⁷ is due to the addition of a fourth voice, which disrupted the strange symbiosis of an integrative harmonic system and a mediaeval stratiform texture. The immediate result was an amalgam of the most disparate elements: archaic devices, such as hocket, with advanced techniques intrinsic to four-part writing, such as paired imitation; neurotic contratenors that combine the properties, in a single composition, of a melodic part, an old-fashioned harmonic complement, and a real bass; square, folk-like melodies which suddenly dissolve into the long, asymmetrical, rhythmically intricate melismas so typical of the late Burgundian style. *Acordes moy ce que je pense* illustrates all these details. Nothing is less typical of Busnois' three-part settings than the wholesale distribution of rests in this and other pieces, by which means he hoped to evade the problems of four-part writing.

We turn now to the most characteristic branch of Busnois' art. All good music defies verbal description, but here the commentator is really at a loss, in the absence of the auditive associations upon which verbal descriptions of music depend. Nothing has ever been recorded and the various special organizations interested in the performance of old music seem never to have heard of him. A representative selection of the three-part chansons was not made available in print until 1927, when the Copenhagen Chansonnier and a portion of the Dijon Chansonnier were published. The isolation of specific aspects of these pieces for analytical purposes is difficult because of the exceptional interdependence of their structural details. It can be taken for granted that in a polyphonic style melodic and harmonic elements, for example, will influence each other; but reciprocal connections between rhythm and imitative techniques, or between sequential patterns and rhythm, or between imitative style and voice spacing, are less self-evident. Although imitation is certainly not the most characteristic feature of this music, it has the widest ramifications and it shall therefore be the central topic of our discussion. These are songs, however, and it is by means of melody that they make their most direct appeal.

Melodic considerations particularly govern the superius, whose range generally remains well within the compass of the average voice. The melodic style,

⁵ The tenor is the inversion of the tenor of the anonymous *J'ay prins amours* in the Dijon Chansonnier. Cf. Pirro, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁶ The borrowed melody is the superius of Hayne's famous chanson.

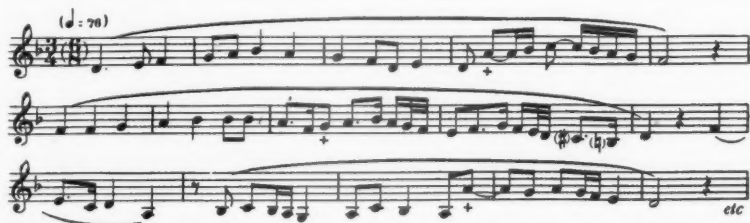
⁷ An exception is *A que ville* (Dijon), the omission of whose tenor and contratenor permits the execution of the superius as a three-part canon at the unison. The canonic version is published in Adrien de LaFage, *Essais de diphthéographie musicale*, Vol. II, Paris, 1864, p. 26.

perhaps because of the greater emphasis on fluidity of rhythm, has less of an epigrammatical character than that of either the preceding or the following generation, so that we are presented not with a certain number of characteristic melodies but instead with a general melodic idiom composed of pre-existent melodic and rhythmic formulas which can be combined and modified endlessly with the aid of freely-invented transitional patterns. The following are a few conventional motifs (the rhythmic and modal guise in which each appears here is only one of several popular forms):



Busnois has a special fondness for short scale figures of unequal note values. He is without a peer in the amazing ingenuity with which he combines these and other "melodics"⁸ into melodies full of delightful evasions, subtle rhythmic shifts, unexpected extensions of the cadence, etc.

C'est bien maleur, superius, bars 1 to 15.



Note how the sombre arch of the opening is transformed by the graceful turn appended to it, how the sequential pattern in bars 8 and 9 introduces a duple counter-rhythm,⁹ how the sudden leap into a brighter register in bar 13 is counterbalanced by the gentle scalewise descent to the cadence. An overall melodic design is clearly indicated in the following tenor melody:

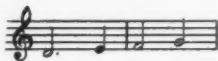
Quant vous me ferez plus de bien, tenor, bars 7 to end.



⁸ This term is borrowed from Curt Sachs, *The Rise of Music in the Ancient World East and West*, New York, 1943, p. 82, where it is used to describe the analogous technique of the ancient Jews.

⁹ Exactly the same passage, even involving the identical accompanying parts, concludes another composition by Busnois, *Quant vous me ferez*.

In both of these examples a fresh rhythmic and melodic idea opens each new phrase. Busnois usually avoids the older procedure of using variants of a single motif at the beginning of several phrases. A rare exception is *Je suis venu vers mon ami*, where each phrase is introduced by a variant of the following figure or of its inversion.



Here our composer makes a point of negating a characteristic feature of his work. Similarly, the chanson *C'est bien maleur*, already discussed as a typical example of Busnois' melodic style, is on the other hand altogether exceptional in its modal implications. While the use of *musica ficta* results in a certain modal instability, since it tends to associate each mode with its neighbour on the fifth above, there is usually nothing equivocal about the key centre in these works. Important factors contributing to the definition of the latter are, in addition to the cadences, the opening notes of the composition, which are almost invariably tonic or dominant, and the melodic skips of the contratenor, which favour the intervals of the tonic triad. In the present instance, however, these defining elements conspire to establish a false sense of modal security, the tonal centre of the first section of the *rondeau* being contradicted in the second section with its strong final cadence on the supertonic of the opening tonality. Is the striking juxtaposition of two key centres which a formal repetition entails intentional, or does it imply that this repetition was not observed?

Busnois seems to have employed the *bergerette*, *Je ne puis vivre ainsi tous-jours* as a special repository for exceptional details, including a long sequence involving all the parts, *stimmtausch*, an *ostinato* passage in the bass, and the clearly defined tonality of C major. The wonderful subtlety and ingenuity of his rhythmic ideas, probably unsurpassed in the entire history of music, are well exemplified in this chanson. While the opposition of duple and triple elements is characteristic also of the first Burgundian school, there it is usually limited to the use of *hemiola*, the simultaneous or alternate disposition of six time-units into groups of 2×3 and 3×2 . Busnois prefers much more intricate cross rhythms and accentual displacements, which, however, have nothing in common with the eccentric abstractions of the late *Ars Nova*. The gentle contour of melodic line, the graceful balance of the overall phrase structure, the elasticity of textural relations, all these are enhanced rather than distorted by the elaboration of rhythmic details.

Rhythmic complexities are sometimes the result of an imitative device. When a ternary metre is indicated we generally find that the imitation occurs after one and a half or two beats, so that a compound or simple duple counter rhythm is implied. When the distance, on the contrary, confirms the signature, this is usually to emphasize the prevailing rhythm in opposition to a rhythmic complication whose source lies elsewhere.

The interval that separates the canonic voices in pitch is as uniform as that which separates them in time is variable. The *comes* almost always follows at the octave or unison, rarely the fifth. Complex imitative devices other than

those which involve the rhythm are not employed, although the permeation of the texture by idiomatic melodic elements results in complicated fortuitous associations. The progress of imitative writing is exemplified in every stage, ranging from the non-imitative style which was already becoming increasingly rare in the chansons of Dufay and his contemporaries to the through-imitation whose full development awaited the new sound ideal of the Renaissance.

Au povere par nécessité is one of the rare examples in which a non-imitative style is maintained throughout. In *Ja que lui ne s'i attende* and *C'est bien maleur* we find a few short canonic passages between tenor and superius. More interest in the form-producing possibilities of imitation is indicated in *Quant vous me ferez plus de bien* and *Je m'esbaïs de vous*. The usual formal consideration for the text shown in the setting of each line to a separate melodic phrase is here carried a step further through the introduction at the beginning of the second and third lines of an imitative passage between the upper parts. A more extensive use of this technique is found in *A une dame j'ay fait veu* and *C'est vous en qui j'ay esperance*. The phrases of the latter composition are set off from each other by means of well-planned contrasts of imitative and non-imitative counterpoint and chordal passages. Here at last we find the contratenor participating in an imitative passage.

C'est vous en qui j'ay esperance, bars 24ff.



Note the curious role of the tenor, which engages in simultaneous imitation with two voices that have no thematic connection with each other. In *Je suis venu vers mon ami* the contratenor is involved in only a single imitative passage, but one of more than casual character:

Je suis venu vers mon ami, bars 64 to end.



A still more apparent formal rôle is given to the contratenor in numerous

chansons¹⁰ that open with a three-part canon initiated by the contratenor, which, however, immediately retires to its usual subordinate position, leaving all subsequent imitative activity to the upper parts.

The final stage is reached in two chansons, *A vous sans autre* and *Bel Accueil*, wherein all voices participate as equal partners in a consistent scheme of imitative relations. A further adumbration of the classical technique of the Flemish motet is seen in the association here of a new point of imitation with each line of the text.¹¹ How far we still are from the Renaissance concept of a homogeneous texture pervading the whole of musical space is indicated by the exceptional placement of the voices in these pieces, the parts being equal not only in melodic character and function but also in range. The two pieces, the first in the alto register and the second in the baritone, are found on successive folios of the Dijon Chansonnier. Their juxtaposition cannot have been a coincidence, in view of their unique character.

The variety of spatial relations in the disposition of the voice-parts and the absence of any and all executive directions in the manuscripts testify neither to a lack of interest in practical problems of performance on the part of the composer nor to negligence on the part of the scribe. They imply rather that the passion for colour and diversity that prevailed in art and life governed the performance of music as well. These lovely songs, so refreshing in comparison with the tiresome perfection of later Renaissance music, deserve something better than long articles on attributions and discrepancies, provenance and pagination. They deserve to be performed. The paintings and tapestries of the Burgundian artists are part of our cultural heritage and even the intellectual and emotional life of our children is enriched, through their fairy tales, by the bizarre atmosphere of the ducal court. Why should the great music of the age remain merely a special preserve of musicologists?

A LIST OF MODERN REPRINTS OF WORKS DISCUSSED

- Acordes moy ce que je pense.* Helen Hewitt, *Harmonice Musices Odhecaton A*, Cambridge, Mass., 1946, No. 33.
- A que ville.* Eugénie Droz, Geneviève Thibault, and Yvonne Rokseth, *Trois chansonniers français du XVe siècle*, Paris, 1927, No. 15 (cf. ff. 7).
- A une dame j'ay fait veu.* Manfred F. Bukofzer, "An Unknown Chansonnier of the 15th Century", in *The Musical Quarterly*, January, 1942, p. 39.
- Au pouvre par nécessité.* Appears as a contrafactum (Regina regnantium) in Heribert Ringmann, *Das Glogauer Liederbuch, Zweiter Teil . . . (Das Erbe deutscher Musik, Erste Reihe: Reichsdenkmale Band 8)*, Cassel, 1937, p. 64.
- A vous sans autre.* Droz, *op. cit.*, No. 18.
- Bel Accueil.* Droz, *op. cit.*, No. 19.
- Ce n'est pas moy.* Pirro, *op. cit.*, p. 122 (incomplete).
- C'est bien maleur.* Droz, *op. cit.*, No. 21.
- C'est vous en qui j'ay esperance.* Droz, *op. cit.*, No. 39.
- Corps digne-Dieu quel mariage.* Raphael Georg Kiesewetter, *Die Verdienste der Niederländer um die Tonkunst*, Amsterdam, 1829, *Beilagen*, p. 60.
- Albert Smijers, *Van Ockeghem tot Sweelinck*, I, Amsterdam, 1939, p. 27.

¹⁰ *Mon seul et sangle, Pour entretenir mes amours, Ce n'est pas moy, Joie me fuit*, and others.

¹¹ An example by an even older master is *Vostre alée*, by Binchois.

- De tous bien.* Kiesewetter, *op. cit.*, *Beilagen*, p. 58.
- In Hydraulis.* Guido Adler and Oswald Koller, *Sechs Trienter Codices . . . Erste Auswahl* (*Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Oesterreich*, VII, Vienna, 1900), p. 105.
- Ja que lui ne s'i attende.* Knud Jeppesen, *Der Kopenhagener Chansonnier*, Copenhagen and Leipzig, 1927, No. 32.
- J'ay prins amours* (anon.). Droz, *op. cit.*, No. 2.
- Jay pris amours tout au rebours.* Hewitt, *op. cit.*, No. 39.
- Je m'esbaïs de vous.* Droz, *op. cit.*, No. 46.
- Je ne demande aultre de gré.* Hewitt, *op. cit.*, No. 42.
- Je ne puis vivre ainsi tousjours.* Droz, *op. cit.*, No. 33.
- Je suis venu vers mon ami.* August Wilhelm Ambros, *Geschichte der Musik*, Vol. II, 3rd edition, Leipzig, 1891, p. 573.
- Joie me fuit.* Droz, *op. cit.*, No. 26.
Adler, *op. cit.*, p. 247.
- Maintes femmes.* Kiesewetter, *op. cit.*, *Beilagen*, p. 56.
- Mon mignault-Gratieuse.* Hewitt, *op. cit.*, No. 17.
- Mon seul et sangle.* Guido Adler and Oswald Koller, *Sechs Trienter Codices . . . Zweite Auswahl* (*Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Oesterreich*, XI-1, Vienna, 1904), p. 74.
- Pour entretenir mes amours.* Heribert Ringmann, *Das Glogauer Liederbuch, Erster Teil* . . . (*Das Erbe deutscher Musik, Erste Reihe: Reichsdenkmale Band 4*), Cassel, 1936, p. 64.
- Quant vous me ferez plus de bien.* Jeppesen, *op. cit.*, No. 24.
- Vostre alée* (Binchois). Jeanne Marix, *Les Musiciens de la cour de Bourgogne au XVe siècle*, Paris, 1937, No. 53.

Bach on the Piano

BY

LISELOTTE SELBIGER

WE have all been brought up with homophonic music, which dominates most of our musical ideas. We are thoroughly familiar with Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin and Brahms, to name only a few classical and romantic composers, whilst Bach has always belonged to a separate category. The polyphonic style, whose culmination he represents, is difficult to listen to without previous detailed explanation. True interpretation¹ and appraisal of Bach is not helped by the style of playing which is sometimes offered in concerts that begin with a composition by this master. Mostly it is either the *Italian* Concerto or the *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue* which are thus performed, the pieces being treated as virtuoso music. It seems hard to realize that the *Italian* Concerto is a concerto in the old Italian style—a concerto grosso—which should be played in a lively way yet with dignity and power. In the *Chromatic Fantasia* "imagination" runs wild—a number of terrific *fortissimi* alternating with *pianissimi* fading away to nothing, quite in the style of Liszt.

One of the chief causes of this misinterpretation of Bach's keyboard style is that most of this music is not marked in the original, and popular editions have been "arranged" by their editors (Czerny, F. David, Busoni, etc.).

Since the nineteenth century composers have marked their works very carefully, for they attach great importance to details of performance and style of interpretation. Yet at the time of Bach performers were left much freedom as to style of playing—but does this mean that we can impose the musical mentality of a later age on his music?

To play Bach properly needs patience and much time, which most pianists do not seem to have at their disposal; so they choose the line of least resistance, performing Bach as though he were a Viennese classic or a romantic composer. Sometimes it strikes us as odd that cultured musicians appear to be quite satisfied with this solution; however it is a fact that even many of the best pianists are not in the least familiar with the polyphonic style.

What can we do to change such a state of affairs? To-day the idea has gained much ground that a faithful interpretation of Bach's keyboard works is only possible on the instruments of Bach's own age, that is to say on harpsichords and clavichords. The clavichord is little suited for concert performance because of its soft tone. The harpsichord, however, is no longer considered merely as a museum piece but has regained an important place in living musical practice. Its distinct and clear tone quality enables every voice in polyphonic compositions to be given full justice. It is not true—as some say—that the "Hammerklavier" revolutionized piano style; on the contrary it was the revolution in style and taste which accelerated the invention of a new instrument

¹ It is always difficult to decide whether any particular style of interpretation is genuine or not. I am here attempting to show whether the romantic or the strict approach is the correct one.

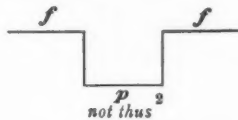
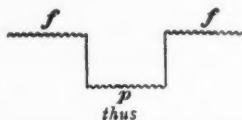
appropriate to the new demands—the successor of the clavichord with mechanical repetition. The development of musical style resulting in the so-called “gallant” age had begun long before Bach, and new times required new means of expression. Another widespread error is to regard the harpsichord as a stage in the development of our modern grand piano, *i.e.* an “antique piano”. The history of the harpsichord runs parallel with that of the piano-forte—from the psaltery through the one-manual (oblong or triangle-shaped) spinet up to the great two-manual concert harpsichord, in the shape of a grand piano and with several stops.

Had Bach known the modern grand piano he would have conceived his music in relation to its possibilities. Yet, as he really did compose, he belongs to a certain period of style with its own instruments, and to that period only—and *this we must respect*. The best solution would be for all players of Bach to have a harpsichord at their disposal. However, as this is impossible, we have to try to present a type of Bach interpretation which is as pure in style as possible. This means that we have to deny ourselves several of the technical potentialities of the modern piano. Here the harpsichord can be very helpful.

This does not mean that we should “play the harpsichord on the piano”,* *i.e.* that we should attempt to produce the same dynamic strength throughout a piece. One cannot achieve exactly the same effect on two different instruments in exactly the same way.

Form and Dynamics

Starting with organs and harpsichords whose means of producing sound are largely based on the contrasting of the sections of a composition by the use of stops and couplings, the player will realize that problems of formal structure and dynamics in a composition are closely interlocked. He will understand from those of Bach's works which he himself marked *p* and *f* that he planned his compositions in large dynamic sections. Therefore it is generally thought that Bach's “dynamics in terraces” do not admit of *cresc.* and *dim.*; yet it seems improbable that Bach should not have made use of the dynamic possibilities inherent in a singing voice or a string instrument. It is possible to produce *cresc.* even on the harpsichord, though it is not easy to alter the essential force of a note by striking it harder. *Cresc.* from *p* to *f* or *dim.* from *f* to *p* was not practised. Yet in a *f* section, but only within the limit of this—or vice versa in a *p* section within the limit of this *p*—dynamic nuances were permissible.



* As at least one famous contemporary concert pianist tries to do! [ED.].

* In a concerto grosso this form is shown most clearly. Its *forte* passages in the *concertino* parts will naturally sound less loud than the *forte* passages of the *tutti*.

A rising figure, especially a line of sequences, generally contains so much energy that it gives the effect of *cresc.* (and vice versa). Bach achieved the effect of *cresc.* or *dim.* by condensing parts, by increasing the "weight" of chords or by intensifying the polyphonic network. "Whenever Bach wanted to express strong emotions he did not do so by excessive force of touch but by intrinsic art" (Forkel). On the piano we must take all these subtle possibilities into consideration: *we must not force effects out of the instrument.*

In the prelude to the English suite in A minor there is clear three-part form. On the harpsichord we would have to use a bright and grandiose sound-colour for A, and one more subdued stop for B. On the piano we can play A *forte* and B *piano*. When playing smaller dance types such as allemandes, courantes, sarabandes in a suite, or some of the preludes, inventions, etc., we may take the character of the different pieces into account and arrange dynamics as well as tempo accordingly. Yet things are not always as easy as that. A fugue does not only consist of *one* subject which needs emphasizing every time it appears, while the interludes fade away to a meaningless *pp*. It is especially in the interludes that strong tension is created, preparing for the return of the main subject—there are exceptions such as, for example, the interludes of the *Chromatic Fantasia*, bars 49–52 and 97–100, and the F minor Fugue, *Wohltemp. Klavier II*, bars 4½–7½ and 16½–20½, where the interludes rely chiefly on chords. Often we hear a pianist begin a fugue *pp* and finish up with a grand *ff*—this may be right in some cases such as in the fugue of the *Chromatic Fantasia* where this treatment is conditioned by the formal structure of the whole work. Yet a fugue subject may just as well start with such strength right from the beginning.

Phrasing and Articulation

Only by correct phrasing and accentuation can all the varied life of the polyphonic partwriting in Bach's works be realized. This concerns pianists just as much as harpsichordists. In this article only a few characteristic examples can be given, though one can always refer to the numerous books and essays dealing with this problem.³

Phrasing means the separating of sections of a composition in a way similar to breathing in speech, or to commas or colons in writing. Such sections we mark by long curved lines or phrase marks.

Articulation means giving due regard to the accentuated and the non-accentuated notes. It also means the clarifying of the smallest motifs—sequences, etc.—by playing *legato*, *staccato* or *portato*, etc., just as the fiddler does with his bow. These smaller units are marked by small slurs. To make clear the difference between phrasing and articulating, here are a few bars from the *Italian Concerto*, 3rd movement, bars 9–12 (the whole 4 bars are one phrase, split up into smaller units of articulation):



³ Hermann Keller: *Die musikalische Artikulation, insbesondere bei Bach.* (Bärenreiter, Kassel.) H.K.'s great merit is his clarification of the difference between phrasing and articulation.

It is interesting to note that the particular works which Bach wrote for teaching purposes (*Wohltemp. Kl.*, inventions, preludes, etc.) are almost entirely unmarked, as his pupils were familiar with his style and habits. On the other hand a large part of his chamber music, and especially his cantatas, which during his lifetime were often performed by amateurs, are fully articulated. This is where our work has to begin. Comparing the above-mentioned compositions for chamber music, etc., with such piano works as the *Italian Concerto*, *Goldberg Variations* and some suites (where the markings are authentic), the student will discover that Bach's markings show no differences in principle between a violin and a piano part. This means that those of his works which are marked may be helpful for articulating those which are not marked. Naturally one cannot establish absolutely watertight rules—Bach's wealth of ideas is almost unlimited—but it will soon appear that certain formulae occur frequently; for instance, steps in seconds are often slurred, whilst larger intervals are generally separated; and the bigger the interval the more definite is this tendency. After long experience in dealing with these problems one develops a kind of instinct for correct articulation.

In discussing some practical examples I shall keep to well-known works. Ex. 1 consists of the same bars of the *Italian Concerto* which have been shown above in their basic structure, illustrating the above-mentioned seconds and larger intervals (the articulation is by Bach himself):

Ex. 1 *Italian Concerto*, 3rd movement



The next example shows how *we* have to proceed. This is the same problem in reverse.

Ex. 2 *Italian Concerto*, 1st movement



Bach has articulated the music up to bar 19: one note *stacc.*, three *legato*. With bar 19 Bach's articulation ends (2a). Bar 20 is nearly always played like 2b or 2c. Since the figure



goes on beyond bar 19, it has to be played like 2d.

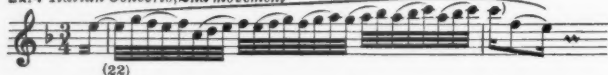
Ex. 3 *Italian Concerto*, 1st movement



This example virtually invites faulty articulation. Nearly all editions have 3a, which goes right against Bach's intentions. He has tied three semiquavers so that the high note may stand out (3b). This is not so easy to play, especially as the articulation of the right and that of the left hand do not coincide (3c).

In the second movement of the *Italian Concerto* bars 22-23 are not marked. I suggest the following articulation, in accordance with analogous parts in pieces marked by Bach himself.

Ex. 4 *Italian Concerto, 2nd movement*



The small slurs are meant to show that the fingers are to be lifted almost unnoticeably so that the very minimum of articulation is possible within perfect and almost uninterrupted *legato*. (See also ex. 13.)

Ex. 5 *Invention nr. 4.*



The left hand is to be articulated like the right. It is quite wrong to believe that the bass plays an insignificant part. On the contrary, in any polyphonic music good articulation of the bass is of particular importance.

Unfortunately Albert Schweitzer, in his otherwise excellent biography of Bach, gives us some hints as to the articulation of Bach's piano works which do not agree at all with what he writes in his discussion of Bach's cantatas later on. Here he falls into several traps, e.g. when he says that top notes are to emphasize a descending line and therefore to be accented (6a).

Ex. 6 *Wohltemp. Klavier II, fugue 17*



On the contrary, here we are dealing with a typical case of an interrupted, "resisting", descending line, which again and again reaches back to higher notes in order to heighten the tension and to delay the descent.⁴ Therefore we do best to play as in 6b. Thus the melodic line having touched, once again, its starting point on e' flat, jumps down an octave to e' flat, and settles down temporarily on a' flat, after which it ascends again and finally concludes on c'.

⁴ Ernst Kurth: "Zur Motivbildung bei Bach", *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 1917.

There is an unlimited number of examples. Editions which take into account Bach's own articulation are most sorely needed. Before the war so-called "original text editions" appeared which were free from "arrangements" and other editing. Unfortunately this important work has been interrupted.

Fingering

Articulation is made easier and is enhanced by careful fingering. Türk mentions "phrasing fingering"⁶ which was already used by the old virginalists. For instance, where necessary, this permits the striking of two keys successively with the same finger. Here are some examples.

Ex.7 *Wohltemp. Klavier I, fugue 21*



If we articulate the fugue subject as in 7a we have to do the same in its inversion (7b). Fingering is marked accordingly, in the left hand too (7c).

Ex.8 *Wohltemp. Klavier I, fugue 16*



This again is typical of tied seconds and marked intervals.

Ex.9 *Twelve Little Preludes, nr. 9*



This form, frequent in Bach's works, is marked with a "1" in the second voice in nearly all editions. Legato is thus made impossible. However, if in the top voice we proceed from the 4th to the 5th finger, "2"-"1" is quite easy in the second voice and we obtain a *legato* in both voices.

Ex.10 *Wohltemp. Klavier I, fugue 16*



Here we are shown how we may "slide" with one finger from a note to its neighbouring note, without which *legato* in both parts would be impossible.

⁵ Edited by Ludwig Landshoff and Kurt Soldan. Peters, Leipzig.

⁶ Gottlob Daniel Türk: *Klavierschule*, 1802.

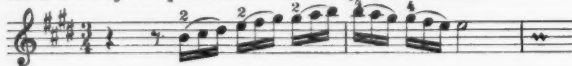
Ex.11 *Wohltemp. Klavier I, fugue 16*

In this case—similar to the previous example—the top point is broken off in order to give the main point perfect *legato*.

In Ex. 12

Ex.12 *Wohltemp. Klavier I, fugue 16*

we have a truly "Bachian" type of fingering. However, Ex. 13

Ex.13 *Sonata for harpsichord and violin E major, 2nd movement*

is of a different kind. The slurs are Bach's own. Here is proof that Bach articulates a piano part like a violin part. To achieve the smoothest possible playing of triplets we do not use the sort of fingering which is generally employed in scale playing but begin each of the small figures with the same finger. Yet the change from one figure to another may be carried out in a way which still guarantees *legato* (see also Ex. 4).

Pianists may object to such fingering because they have the pedal at their disposal. Aided by the pedal, they could produce *legato* with ease (so they reason) whilst this would be highly difficult simply by hand technique. Yet use of the pedal can *never* give the same result as hand-produced *legato*. When the pedal is pressed down, all the dampers are raised and the whole series of overtones keeps vibrating, whilst only one damper is raised if we strike a key without using the pedal. Obviously we preserve a more transparent texture if we stick to hand *legato*. Besides, when using the pedal, several notes must necessarily sound simultaneously,—this is absolutely wrong in polyphonic part-writing. The pedal primarily belongs to homophonic music; polyphonic music must be interpreted "horizontally". This does not mean that the pedal is to be banned altogether from Bach's music. As soon as the writing becomes homophonic (e.g. chords in sarabandes or the preludes in B flat minor and E flat minor in *Wohltemp. Klavier I*) restrained use of pedal is justified in order to achieve greater unity of harmonic sound.

Ornamentation

Since ornaments are generally marked merely by rather vague indications in the works of the old masters, the realization of them is often full of pitfalls. Even though it may be an exaggeration to say that the music of that time is only preserved in something like shorthand sketches,⁷ we do know for certain that it was necessary, within certain limits, to introduce real vitality into this music by individual additions and improvisation. There is proof of this in the strongly ornamental repeats of some of Bach's sarabandes, etc. The performer was expected to be trained in improvisation and to know something about composing. Hence the old masters saw no necessity for the precise notation of what had become traditional embellishments.

French composers were exceptional. They were so concerned about grace notes in their works that they gave exact indications in their "pièces de clavecin" (Chambonnières, Rameau, Couperin, etc.) as to the interpretation and quality of ornaments, for these were always of special importance in French music.

Many of the books dealing with ornaments, such as the well-known ones by Quantz⁸ and Ph. E. Bach⁹ are not necessarily correct for J. S. Bach. There were different graces at different periods of musical history.

Some of these ornaments accentuate (shake, mordent, Doppelschlag); a long note retains its power through a long shake. Others (suspensions) heighten the expression, and some are merely decorative—or so they seem to us, for we lack the true knowledge of exactly what these graces stood for at that time. Therefore it may be permissible to prune the elaborate and superabundant indications in some French compositions, on the understanding that any of them which obviously have a definite function in the music must be preserved. Bach is somewhat different. He introduces them sparingly into his piano music, if we except such pieces as the *aria* in the *Goldberg* Variations and some sarabandes and other slow movements. With Bach we are aided solely by one indication of his own: a list of graces in the introduction to "Friedemann Bach's *Klavierbüchlein*". Unfortunately many errors are to be found in most practical editions and collections. It is difficult to correct these mistakes now that these editions are so immensely popular.

One such example of a very common mistake may be sufficient. A shake in a slow movement may be played slowly.

Ex. 14 *Italian Concerto, 2nd movement*



⁷ Arnold Schering: "Verschwundene Traditionen des Bach-Zeitalters", *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 1904.

⁸ Joh. Joachim Quantz: *Versuch einer Anweisung, die Flöte traversiere zu spielen*, 1752. New edition by Kahnt, Leipzig.

⁹ Carl Phil. Em. Bach: *Versuch über die wahre Art das Klavier zu spielen*, 1753. New edition by Kahnt, Leipzig.

The player might try to play 14a like 14b—incidentally all conclusions in this piece finish in the same way. Such an interpretation is much more expressive than mere virtuoso shakes which are quite meaningless.

All the same, Bach did leave at least some indications as to how he visualized the ornamentation of his works. There are occasions when he composed (that is to say wrote out) the ornaments, since he obviously did not want to leave them to the improvisation of the player: for example, the Largo of the B minor flute Sonata and the second movement of the *Italian Concerto*.¹⁰

Time

Some indications of *tempo* are Bach's own, e.g. in the 2nd and 3rd movement of the *Italian Concerto*, as well as in most of his chamber music. However, these indications should not be accepted literally by us, since their meaning has changed since Bach's time. In general to-day we play the fast *tempi* too fast and the slow *tempi* too slowly. It is obvious that *tempo* must not be too fast if the player wishes to keep to the principles laid down above. The elaborate dance movements in a suite lose much of their charm when played too fast.

The first law to be observed is to stick to the *tempo* once it has been chosen. This does not mean that we should play with metronomic precision all the way through. On the contrary many theorists even before Bach give exact indications as to using small *rubati* within the standard *tempo*, in order to achieve greater eloquence of declamation.¹¹

One of the worst habits in playing Bach is to drag out every cadence within a piece with a big *ritardando*. It is true that a cadence always has a strong quality of finality; yet if the piece continues, the cadence should only be marked by a certain increase in emphasis—not by a *ritardando*. It is different with the *final* cadence: here an organic and natural *rallentando* is called for. In general, quick movements should be concluded by smaller *ritardandi* than slow movements.

"Correct" *tempo* cannot be fixed theoretically. The flowing, unbroken rhythm so characteristic of Bach's music, and of baroque music in general, formulates its own rules of performance. Having studied it for a long time one acquires some kind of natural feeling for *tempi* in which it is possible to do justice to the greatness and the artistry of the music.

Thorough Bass

With the revival of old music the continuo player has returned. However he is no longer as important as he used to be in the eighteenth century. One reason for this is the fact that continuo player and conductor were then one and the same person. Yet there are other reasons, even more important.

¹⁰ Wanda Landowska: *Musique ancienne*. Paris, 1908. W.L. gives a very interesting example, showing us how the slow movement of the *Italian Concerto* would look without the ornaments.

¹¹ François Couperin: *L'Art de toucher le Clavecin*. Paris, 1717. New edition by Anna Linde, Breitkopf & Härtel, Leipzig. Here Couperin shows us how to achieve a *rubato* by means of the ornaments.

The thorough bass demanded that the player should be capable of improvising his part in accordance with the character of the piece, the number and combination of instruments or voices employed, the size of the room where the music was performed, etc. It was considered absolutely vital that the thorough bass player should be able to improvise his part at sight. The other instruments were grouped around him; it was his task to co-ordinate and support them, and we know that Bach directed his orchestra from the harpsichord. Here a musician's ingenuity counted for much; and Bach's improvised continuo parts certainly were much more elaborate and interesting than most text books suggest.

It is generally assumed that anyone can play "those few chords", especially as the conductor has taken over all the other duties of the former continuo player, who nowadays leads a shadowy existence. People who hold this opinion really ought to leave out the harpsichord altogether. Unfortunately very few pianists can accomplish the task, which is far more difficult than they think, especially where chamber music is concerned. Even on the occasions when the continuo player does not improvise his part he should be familiar with the rudiments of harmony and counterpoint. He should be able to alter (at sight) our nineteenth and twentieth century arrangements which are almost invariably bad, and his technical standard as a player should be high.¹² This obviously requires a lot of specialized knowledge—and pianists who do not possess this knowledge are too often entrusted with the job, just as composers who know nothing about old music are frequently asked to "edit" old music and "arrange" the thorough bass. This sometimes means that brilliant modernistic piano parts are "composed" with the bass altered at will. In many cases the arranger invents an additional melodic part for the right hand which crosses and outplays the other parts.

It is impossible, within a short article, to lay down exact rules for good thorough bass playing. It is always best to learn by experience; but it is quite wrong to play bad arrangements uncritically and to take them for granted.

These ideas are meant to be general pointers, to encourage musicians to think about questions of style and performance. In this respect the music teacher in particular has an important task to fulfil. It is worth spending much time in studying the problems of the performance of Bach—he who has not this time at his disposal should leave Bach alone. Playing Bach in the wrong style is worse than not playing him at all. On the other hand it is better to play Bach well on the piano than badly on the harpsichord;¹³ only too often the harpsichord is discredited as an instrument by bad interpretation.

However, let us not forget that what has been discussed here is only a means to the end of discovering the true life of this music. He who has consciously experienced how much concentrated power and energy is incorporated in

¹² Arnold Schering: *Aufführungspraxis alter Musik*, pages 147–166.

¹³ Many pianists think that they can play both harpsichord and piano. They should understand that an instrument with so different a mechanism requires not only a completely different touch but almost another artistic approach.

every one of Bach's parts—nay in every minute passage of demi-semiquavers—will understand what I mean.

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British Standard Musical Pitch *

BY

LL. S. LLOYD

CONCERT Pitch is the traditional term used in Britain, but nowhere else, to describe orchestral pitch. Our use of the term will therefore be properly limited to pitches employed after the symphony orchestra came into being: as I shall explain, that means that we shall not go far wrong if we go no further back into history than the beginning of the nineteenth century. It may provide a useful background to what I shall have to say if I begin with the frequencies, in cycles per second (c/s), of the tuning-forks used at different dates since the year 1800 for recording the tuning-A of English orchestras:—

A.D.					c/s
1813	Original Philharmonic Pitch	..	..	..	424
1820-26	Sir George Smart's fork, used by him as conductor of the Philharmonic orchestra	..	..	..	433
1846-54	Mean Philharmonic Pitch, in later use	..	..	..	453
1874	Highest Philharmonic Pitch	..	..	..	455.5
1896	New Philharmonic Pitch	..	..	..	439

The frequencies in the above table refer to the pitches to which orchestras would be tuned at the beginning of a concert. We may therefore add an average frequency for the note A in the treble stave as recorded during performance, by more than one observer, from broadcast concerts, *viz.*:—

1937-38	Average pitch reached in performance by selected English orchestras	443
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Finally we come to modern standard musical pitch:—

1939	British Standard Concert Pitch	440
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This was adopted in December, 1939, by the British Standards Institution pursuant to the recommendations of an international conference held in London in May, 1939.

It may be convenient if I relate the differences between these several frequencies to familiar musical intervals. The larger differences can be expressed in terms of a semitone of equal temperament, with which we are all familiar on our pianos. Thus if the Philharmonic Society's original pitch of 1813 were raised by an equal-tempered semitone, the frequency would rise from 424 c/s to 449 c/s, *i.e.* by 25 c/s. We shall come across this frequency of 449 c/s again. Within the limits shown by the frequencies in the above table, *i.e.* 424 to 455 c/s, we shall be correct if we think of a difference of 25 c/s as corresponding, at the pitch of tuning-A, to an equal-tempered semitone.

* A lecture delivered to the Acoustics Group of the Physical Society on 10th November, 1949, under the title "Concert Pitch".

For smaller differences the comma is a useful interval for comparison. This small interval is the excess of four perfect fifths over two octaves and a just major third, or the excess of a major tone over a minor tone. Its frequency ratio is therefore $81 : 80$. So at 440 c/s, a comma is equivalent to a frequency difference of 5.5 c/s. We may say that a difference of 5 c/s is a trifle less than a comma. I shall be able to explain later why 5 c/s, or about a comma at the pitch of tuning-A, is to be regarded as an average measure of the flexibility, in actual performance, at that pitch, of most of the orchestral wind instruments other than trombones (which command completely free intonation like the strings). The flexibility of the bassoon is slightly greater, about 8 or 9 c/s.

One final comment on this table may be added. A. J. Ellis made a careful determination of the frequency of a tuning-fork that may have been used by Handel, and certainly represented well enough the pitch of his day. Ellis found that its frequency was 423 c/s. Handel, naturalized in 1726, died in 1759. Ellis also gave 422 c/s as the frequency of a fork that was said to give the pitch used for the orchestra in Vienna in Mozart's day. Mozart died in 1791. So the original pitch used by the Philharmonic Society (in 1813) was as nearly as could be the pitch used by Handel and Mozart. This pitch had therefore remained reasonably constant for some 60 years in this country.

Very different is the history of Concert Pitch (*i.e.* English orchestral pitch) for the *next* 60 years. By the end of that time it had risen by just over 30 c/s, *i.e.* by more than an equal-tempered semitone. The question naturally arises, why was such a distortion of the music of the great classical composers allowed? Why did no one stop it?

The answer is that similar rises of the pitch of the orchestra had begun to take place on the Continent during the first part of this period, but that there they were successfully checked. Thus, by 1858, the pitch which had been equivalent to 404 c/s in the year 1700 had risen, in the Paris Grand Opera, to 448 c/s. In Berlin it had risen from 422 c/s in 1752 to 452. Similar rises occurred elsewhere. The first effective steps to check this universal rise of orchestral pitch were taken in France, where it led the Government to appoint, in 1858, a Commission charged with the task of finding a means of establishing a uniform musical pitch, of fixing a tonal standard to serve as an *invariable* reference (note that word *invariable*), and of indicating the measures to be taken to assure the adoption and maintenance of this standard pitch. The result was a report by the Commission which caused the French Government to establish a standard musical pitch, *diapason normal*, of 435 c/s. This they did by a ministerial decree dated 16th February, 1859. Three months later a second decree laid down regulations for the construction, and for the verification by the distinguished physicist Lissajous, of copies of the standard reference tuning-fork. The construction of this standard fork to give a frequency of 435 c/s at a temperature of 15° C. was also undertaken by him.

As the French decrees gave legal force to the new musical pitch, their immediate effect was the reduction of the pitch of the Paris Grand Opera by about half a semitone. This very effectively checked the rise that had been going on. The French action aroused keen interest in Germany and, to a less

extent, in Italy; and, in many places in these countries, the French pitch was adopted by local orchestras.

As the rise of orchestral pitch in this country had by that time become even more serious than on the Continent, one might have expected that this country would have followed suit. The case for doing so was certainly a strong one. For example, when the French Commission were collecting evidence about the pitches used in various places, they received three tuning-forks from Messrs. Broadwood and Sons. The first was used for tuning pianos to accompany the voice at vocal concerts. Its frequency was 434. The second, with a frequency of 452.5, was used for tuning pianos to play with instruments. The third had a frequency of 455.5, giving the pitch subsequently used by the Philharmonic orchestra. In such discrepancies of pitch is to be found the reason for the dictionary definition of Concert Pitch, *viz.*:—"slightly higher than the ordinary" (Concise Oxford Dictionary). So when the Society of Arts appointed a Committee of 50 members in 1859, after the publication of the French decrees, to go into this question of orchestral pitch they might well have expected a recommendation for the adoption of the French pitch, if not the adoption of Broadwood's pitch used for vocal music. But that was not at all what happened. The Committee's failure to achieve any useful result was so complete and so unfortunate in its effect that, lest I may be thought to condemn too severely, I will quote from the strictures passed on it by A. J. Ellis, in a paper he read to the Society of Arts in 1877:

"The Committee do not seem to have closely investigated the history of Musical Pitch, and its leanings to C 512 and C 528—which [last] it finally recommended—seem to have arisen rather from arithmetical than from musical feeling."

C 512, *i.e.* 2⁹, was what is called philosophical pitch, based on a frequency of 1 raised through 9 octaves. 528 being a multiple of 3, C 528 appealed to some members because it gave integral frequencies to a just F and A in the treble stave (*viz.* 352 and 440). The Committee engaged in futile discussion of such *a priori* considerations as this, ignoring the fact that what was in question was a constant rise of concert pitch. This was to fiddle while Rome was burning.

Ellis continued:

"The Committee intending to adopt A 440 made it identical with C 528: whereas on equal temperament A 440 requires C 523.25 so that if their A was right their C was much too sharp."

Finally, in the absence of any competent physicist like Lissajous, the difficult task of making a reference tuning-fork was assigned to an unqualified amateur scientist who shall be nameless. His technique, as described by Ellis, is quite incredible. A thick gut string, stretched on a double bass, was tuned to be two octaves below the note of the fork by touching the quarter-length node, the harmonic so produced, two octaves above the fundamental, being tuned by ear to a unison with the fork. Then, a fine point being attached to the string, a long strip of paper was passed over it for a measured length at uniform speed; and, in passing, it was pricked by the vibrating point. The holes so made were counted and their number per second calculated. The result multiplied by four was taken to be the frequency of the vibrating fork. This

was 25 years after Scheibler had shown how to measure frequencies accurately by his tuning-fork tonometer.

If anyone can think of any possible source of error which this gentleman failed to make use of—always excluding the conduct of his experiment in the hottest tropical region he could reach—I shall be glad to have it pointed out. The result was what might have been expected. The reference tuning-fork he made for treble C was tested, years later, by Ellis and Hipkins and found to give a frequency of 534.5 c/s instead of the intended 528 c/s. An organ tuned from this C by equal temperament would give to tuning-A a frequency of 449.5. It will be remembered that, at the beginning of this paper, we found that 449 c/s would be an equal-tempered semitone higher than the original Philharmonic Pitch of 424 c/s. Ellis observed:

"The Society of Arts pitch, which was supposed to be but little sharper than the French, actually became one of our very sharp pitches."

One might have expected that there would have been one among the 50 members who would have known enough to question the technique used to determine the frequency of the fork. And after all it would not have been unreasonable to suggest that, for greater safety, Lissajous should be asked to compare the reference fork with one of his own by means of his vibration microscope.

It is true that practically the whole musical world ignored this English attempt to go one better than the French, but the harm was done. There was now no practicable means of stopping the continued rise of English concert pitch. Even the Vienna conference of 1885, which made the French pitch into Continental pitch, could not put matters right in this country. Those who are old enough to remember the conflict in the 1890's between English Concert Pitch and Continental pitch will appreciate how calamitous in its results was the Committee's unwillingness to follow the French lead, as some German orchestras had been content to do 25 years before the Vienna conference.

The final stage was reached in 1885 when, perhaps as a sequel to the Vienna conference, the Society of Arts appointed a small but expert committee to examine the position. This committee made a report with a good deal of whitewash in it, published in February, 1886, which obliterated as far as possible all trace of the influence of the work of the Committee of 1859. It recommended that every encouragement should be given to the use of *diapason normal*. The trouble was that in this country, by then, there was an imperfect notion of what *diapason normal* really meant. Had the Committee of 1859 been less self-complacent they might have obtained, for their own enlightenment, copies of the two French decrees of 1859. These might have been salvaged from the ruins of their report, which would then not have been wholly useless. For while copies of these decrees could have been obtained from Paris readily enough in 1859, Ellis complained in his *History of Musical Pitch*, 1880, that the original French decrees "could not be purchased", and that he had been dependent on an English translation which had appeared in the *Journal of the Society of Arts* for 3rd June, 1859, a translation which was reprinted from a paper called *The Musical World*. Here was misfortune indeed. For the second of the French decrees was dated 31st May, 1859, only three days

before the *Journal* appeared, and, until Ellis' translation of the report of the proceedings at the Vienna conference of 1885 was published by the Society of Arts in 1886, there was insufficient evidence available in this country to show that *diapason normal* was in fact based on an absolute frequency.

The frequency of vibration of a tuning-fork of untempered steel, as specified in the second French decree, *falls* with a *rise* of temperature. It does so by about 1 part in 16,000 for a rise of 1° F. This is a minute alteration, and musically it is of no practical significance. But members of the Physical Society will, I am sure, agree that when a physicist like Lissajous was asked to provide a reference fork to give a standard frequency, which had been defined as an invariable standard and might indeed be used as a physical standard, he would wish, for exactness, to specify the temperature at which his fork would give the required frequency. For this purpose the French Commission had proposed a temperature of 15° C., probably on Lissajous' advice as a member. Here the second decree becomes pertinent. It provided for the verification by Lissajous, without any charge, of tuning-forks submitted for test and stamping. This verification was to be carried out in the room in the Paris Conservatory in which the standard fork was deposited. This was a lofty room in which we may assume an equable temperature, and 15° C. was regarded as normal room temperature at that date. Probably confusion in this country was increased by the fact that the French word for musical pitch is *diapason*. The same word is also the French for tuning-fork.

Here is the best excuse I can offer for the nineteenth-century blunder, prevalent in this country, and repeated from reference book to reference book, that *diapason normal*, i.e. standard musical pitch, had a temperature coefficient in performance. Members of the B.S.I. committee of 1938-39 had been disquieted on this point by various documents from the Continent and America put in for consideration by the London conference of 1939. Accordingly when the committee was reconstituted after the war, the British Standards Institution was requested to obtain, from the French standards authority, copies of the original French decrees. When these were received it was found that they made no mention, from beginning to end, of temperature. In other words the frequency of 435 c/s on which *diapason normal* had been based was an absolute frequency. It appears important that this should be generally known if misunderstanding is not to prejudice the success, in practice, of the new *British Standard Concert Pitch*, of which a revised edition was published in July last. That is why, on the advice of the B.S.I. committee concerned, the two French decrees have been printed, both in their original French and in translation, in an Appendix to the revised *Standard*. And because there is so much confusion about them, three other things are printed in the Appendix:

- (1) the passage from the French Commission's report recommending that the standard reference fork should be constructed by a competent person to give the standard frequency of 435 c/s when its temperature was 15° C.;
- (2) the principal resolutions of the Vienna conference of 1885, as translated by Ellis, which show that Continental pitch was based on an absolute frequency. (It may here be added that a footnote which Ellis attached to his translation of

resolution V shows that he rightly interpreted the pitch as one based on an absolute frequency, and the 15° C. as applying only to the fork.);

- (3) the resolutions of the Philharmonic Society about their new pitch of 1896, which show that in the end it was not actually *diapason normal* as they had originally intended.

I hope that everyone interested, and every reference library, will obtain a copy of the revised *Standard* (British Standards Institution, 2s. 6d.), if only because it contains these records which should be useful for future reference by any writer on the subject. They speak for themselves; and they are not readily available, at present, anywhere else.

This completes to within 5 years of the end of the century the sad story of the nineteenth-century attempts to keep Concert Pitch in order. Happily, we are here able to record a complete change in the picture, when musical considerations came again into their rightful place. One name above all others, that of Sir Henry Wood, is to be associated with this achievement. We have only to recall that during the 1880's Philharmonic Pitch had risen to 455 c/s, to understand why it offended Wood's sense of musicianship. It is true that in 1879, at the instance of Adelina Patti, the Covent Garden Opera had adopted French pitch. This no doubt weighed with Wood, who knew very well that an unduly high pitch was most undesirable for vocal music. Indeed I have been told, though I can give no reference for the statement, that in this matter he had the advantage of the advice of Dr. Cathcart, the well known laryngologist. The important fact is that, notwithstanding the heavy expense involved, Wood succeeded in 1895 in bringing about the lowering of the pitch of the newly erected organ in the Queen's Hall to $A = 439$, which was $\frac{2}{3}$ of a semitone lower than the current Philharmonic Pitch of 455 c/s. It is no criticism of Wood that his technical advisers assured him that the pitch thus adopted was *diapason normal*. We know that it was not, for this assurance presumed a temperature coefficient for the French pitch. As we have seen, it was in fact based on an absolute frequency. It is difficult to understand how Wood's advisers could have so misdirected themselves within 10 years of the adoption of Continental pitch at Vienna in 1885, with an absolute frequency of 435. For the Vienna resolutions included one which is very relevant to the pitch to which organs should be tuned:

"Organs shall be brought to the standard pitch [*i.e.* $A = 435$] at such mean temperatures as shall be suitable for the special circumstances under which they are used."

This would obviously have allowed a continental organ like the Queen's Hall organ to be tuned to $A = 435$ at 68° F., for Hipkins found this to be the mean temperature of the "special circumstances" under which organs were used in concert halls.

Still the important thing is not this discrepancy of less than a comma, but the fact that Wood really did stop the continuous rise of orchestral pitch in concerts for which he was responsible. The good work begun by Wood was continued in 1896 by the Philharmonic Society, which in that year adopted what is known as "new Philharmonic Pitch" based on a frequency of 439 c/s, but with a temperature coefficient that related this frequency to 68° F.

From the three recommendations made by the international conference in 1939, which it is the primary purpose of the new *British Standard* [880 : 1949] to record, it is evident that the new international pitch is based on an absolute frequency. What is not so generally known is that the recommendation placed before the conference by the British Standards Institution, on the advice of Dr. Kaye's committee of 1938-39, proposed, specifically, an absolute frequency as a basis of the new pitch, and suggested a frequency of 440 in place of the previous Concert Pitch (the new Philharmonic Pitch) of 439. The difference between these frequencies, as such, is minute. It is only about twice the theoretical flattening, in equal temperament, of the fifth on middle C.

The change from 439 to 440 was not made from any "arithmetical feeling" such as influenced the Society of Arts Committee 80 years earlier. True, the representative of one learned society did in fact urge the change on some such ground; but the only result was to prejudice the technicians, in particular the organ-builders, against the change. In fact the change was made in spite of his urging, not because of it. There was a very practical reason for it. 439 is a prime number, and its production for a broadcast tuning-A would present broadcasting engineers with an unenviable task. It was important to use an absolute frequency that would secure their co-operation. To-day the B.B.C. broadcasts daily, just before 6 o'clock on the Third Programme, a frequency of 440 c/s. This they do with an accuracy better than 1 part in 10 million. This, and the substitution, in the concert hall, of an electrical tone-generator for the oboe as a sub-standard of pitch, make it quite unnecessary to specify any tuning-fork as a reference standard of international musical pitch to-day. All that is necessary nowadays is to specify a number, 440, as the number of cycles per second for the absolute frequency on which that pitch is based.

There is one aspect of this new *Standard* which will be of particular interest to physicists. The pitch of most of the wind instruments, and still more the pitch of the organ, are affected by the temperature, though this has negligible effect on the piano. How does the new *Standard* deal with this? The *Standard* itself does not deal with it at all. In the words of a memorandum put in by one of the participating countries, the effect of temperature on the pitch of these instruments is regarded as being in a sense a defect of the instrument, and the problem as being in effect the problem of the instrument makers. But guidance should be given to them to promote some uniformity of action. Pending further study and perhaps international action, this guidance is the duty of the various standardizing authorities.

The organ presents perhaps the most troublesome problem. But organ-builders are much better qualified to pronounce on it than any outside body, however expert. The first of the British Standard Technical Recommendations made in the new *Standard* follows, practically word for word, the example set by the Vienna conference in its treatment of organs. The Vienna recommendation was quoted a few paragraphs back; and it gives responsibility, and the necessary freedom, to the organ-builder who has to provide organs for use in churches and cathedrals as well as in heated concert halls.

The second of the British Standard Technical Recommendations deals with orchestral wind instruments, and reads:

Orchestral wind instruments. 68° F. should be the workshop temperature at which an orchestral instrument should give the standard pitch, after it has been blown long enough (or otherwise warmed) to reach equilibrium between the warming by the breath at 98.4° F. and the cooling by radiation to the cooler room at 68° F.

In considering this technical recommendation, it must be remembered that part of the task of the British Standards Institution committee was to prevent any further rise of concert pitch. Measurements, made in 1938, of the frequency of tuning-A in the performance of numerous European orchestras whose concerts were broadcast showed that further increase was certainly threatened. Since the object of fixing a temperature for the manufacturer's tuning is to prevent the pitch in performance from rising unduly above the standard pitch when the concert hall is hot, a manufacturer's temperature that is on the high side is to be preferred to one on the low side. 68° F. is the temperature to which instrument makers in this country have been accustomed to work for half a century, for it was the temperature at which the frequencies laid down in 1896 by the new Philharmonic Pitch came into effect. The British Standards Institution committee had no evidence before them which would warrant them in advising a higher figure than 68° F. Among other things, full information about maximum concert hall temperatures of to-day would have been required. The committee did not fail to take note of the fact that the resolutions of the Vienna conference had dealt with this matter somewhat differently:

"V. The wind instruments to be used . . . shall be tuned to the standard pitch [435 c/s] at 24° Centigrade [75° F.]. Instrument makers shall show, by an impressed factory pitch mark, that they guarantee their instruments to have been thus tuned."

It was to this resolution that Ellis, in his translation, attached the footnote I mentioned earlier.

In judging of this Vienna resolution it should be remembered that the player of a wind instrument has some command over the intonation of his instrument, as indeed Helmholtz pointed out. When the instrument, in the process of manufacture, is tuned in a room with a high temperature, such as 75° F., it will tend to produce a flat pitch when played in a concert hall at a temperature of, say, only 68° F. The instrumentalist can do something to sharpen the pitch in performance, thus compensating somewhat for this tendency. As the concert proceeds the temperature rises, unless the hall is air-conditioned, and the player finds it easier to play at the right pitch. But until the temperature of the concert hall rises above 75° F., which it is seldom likely to do, the heat of the hall is not liable, in itself, to raise the pitch of performance above the standard. The Vienna conference discussed this matter at considerable length, but the report does not record the *pros.* and *cons.* of the argument. The majority view, which prevailed, was perhaps intended to play for safety and to make it as unlikely as possible that the pitch of the orchestra would rise too much during performance, through a rise in the temperature of the concert hall. In other words a temperature for the manufacturer's tuning that was on the high side was preferred.

It may be added that it is recognized practice in America to use a workshop temperature of 72° F. for the tuning of orchestral instruments during manufacture. But this figure is intended to represent the temperature of American concert halls, not something chosen deliberately as a little higher.

It may be thought that a mistake was made in 1939 in not trying more strenuously to enforce a return to the Continental pitch of 1885 based on an absolute frequency of 435 c/s; in other words that the ideal rather than the attainable should have been aimed at. The expense that would be involved in lowering the pitch of existing instruments to a frequency of 435 c/s, as an alternative to buying new ones, was in fact fully explored. I do not think it can be disputed that, given a free hand, many of the representatives who attended the London conference of 1939 would have preferred, on musical grounds, a frequency of 435 c/s to one of 440; and orchestral pitch is essentially a musical matter, the role of the technician being to help the musician to attain, in practice, the pitch selected on musical grounds. Italy's representatives, indeed, were concerned to press the claims of the standard pitch laid down by the Fascist *régime*. This was based on an absolute frequency of 435 c/s. But their case was weakened by the fact that their standard permitted a tolerance of ± 2 c/s, and in fact the conductors of Italian orchestras often allowed them to tune to a frequency of 437 c/s, which was not far short of our English 439.

I believe that many of us, as physicists, feel that we have very little information, expressed in physical measurements, about the intonation of the orchestra. I should therefore like to end this lecture by calling attention to some most interesting electrical measurements made in Italy as the result of the London conference, before that country entered the war. These measurements are recorded in a paper published in Rome in 1941—"Note e relievi sulla frequenza del la 3". I commend that paper to all physicists who can read Italian and want information about the intonation of the orchestra in performance. One conclusion reached by the authors was that it was easy to exaggerate the part played by rise of temperature in the actual rise of pitch of performance. On this point the actual measurements of frequency were convincing. It was from this Italian paper that I obtained the frequency measurements which show that the flexibility of all the usual orchestral wind instruments in performance extends to at least a comma.

The paper, as a whole, was intended to be the Italian contribution to a programme of further study recommended at the 1939 conference "on the methods to be adopted to ensure the practical observance of the standard pitch". This programme is printed as Appendix B to B.S. 880 : 1949, and it should be studied by all who find themselves in a position to make experimental contributions to the solution of the problems it sets out.

NOTE. As explained at the beginning of this lecture, "concert pitch" was the nineteenth-century term for orchestral pitch in this country, but nowhere else, and it was applied to a variety of pitches. Its use in the British Standard of musical pitch has been found to cause difficulty in translation, and the British Standards Institution has decided to substitute "British Standard Musical Pitch" for the present title—"British Standard Concert Pitch".

Arnold Cooke's Symphony

BY

JOHN CLAPHAM

ARNOLD COOKE's Symphony in B flat received its first performance by the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra under Sir Adrian Boult on 26th February, 1949. Cooke, who is a Mus.D. of Cambridge and a pupil of Paul Hindemith, is in his early forties, and up to now has written mostly chamber music works. His string Quartet No. 1 and sonatas for two pianos, for viola and piano, and for violin and piano have been published, and broadcast performances of his piano Trio and string Quartet No. 2 have recently taken place. Cooke is now completing* a piano Quartet for the Cambridge Festival of Music and Drama in August this year. His piano Concerto was broadcast by Kentner in 1943, and a Concerto for string orchestra was commissioned by the B.B.C. South American Service. The four Shakespearean *Sonnets* for soprano and string orchestra were first heard at a Gerald Cooper concert at the Wigmore Hall two years ago. Last year the *Processional Overture* was first performed at the Cambridge Music Festival, and it was repeated at a Promenade Concert.

The first impressions made by Cooke's Symphony are that it is rhythmically vital and robust, direct and purposeful. The texture is frequently contrapuntal and canonic, but it has the clarity of Mozart rather than the complexity of J. S. Bach. The design is orderly, and there is an underlying tonal scheme which serves as a logical basis for the form. Ambiguity of mode is common, and this will be referred to later. The musical material, melodic, rhythmic and harmonic, is of a kind intended to be enjoyed by audience and performers alike, for it is often genial and good-humoured and the instrumentalists are all given interesting lines to play. There are resemblances to Hindemith, but the music is decidedly English and individual.

A number of the themes are in cheerful vein, and they appear to outnumber those of a more serious character, but there is considerable variety of mood. The opening of the Symphony has a conspicuous dual character, for the solemn drooping first theme is completed by a bar for clarinet and bassoon which has an air of levity:

Ex. 1 Allegro moderato

The musical score for the first movement of Arnold Cooke's Symphony, showing the first bar of the opening theme. The score is in B-flat major, 4/4 time, and is marked 'Allegro moderato'. It features a string quartet (Str.) and a woodwind section (Fl., Ob., Cl., Fag., Hh.). The strings play a solemn, drooping first theme, while the woodwinds play a contrasting, more cheerful bar. The score is written for a full orchestra, with the strings in the foreground and the woodwinds in the background. The first bar of the opening theme is marked with a 'p' (piano) dynamic. The woodwind section enters with a contrasting, more cheerful bar, marked with a 'p' (piano) dynamic.

There is power in this first movement. The first bar of the opening theme is well used in contrast with other more tranquil motives. It makes an

* This was written in 1949 [E.D.].

impressive entry in the development (Ex. 2), returns triumphantly at the recapitulation and has the last quiet word in the coda.

Ex. 2 Fl. Ob. Cl.



The slow movement follows the scherzo and is mainly contemplative. It rises at the end to an eloquence and emotional expressiveness not to be found elsewhere in the work. The scherzo and finale are for the most part light-hearted.

Each of the four movements is in sonata-form, with considerable latitude in the use of keys in the second subject groups. Recapitulations do not end in the tonic keys, but the codas easily re-establish these. The scherzo, since it is in sonata-form, lacks the customary trio, with the result that the movement is more concentrated than is usual. The long principal theme predominates throughout most of the movement, but adequate relief is given by the more slowly moving subsidiary and its accessory themes. In the finale a fugue, on a subject derived from the brass fanfare at the beginning of the movement, occupies nearly the whole of the development section. This fugue swings along on its jaunty way without much regard for the niceties of successive entries in tonic and dominant, but nevertheless it is typical fugue. The subject is as follows:

Ex. 3



It reaches a climax when the brass has the subject in stretto at half a bar's distance with the horns inverting the theme.

The opening theme of the first movement (Ex. 1) is, with the exception of one note, strictly diatonic in the key of B flat minor. It is not always possible to say whether a theme is major or minor, but there is a strong feeling for key throughout the Symphony, or for a keynote without the mode being clearly defined. Tonic chords often lack thirds, and melodic themes are frequently chromatic, suggesting one mode in one bar and the other in the next. In Ex. 4 the major mode is uppermost despite the D flats.

Ex. 4 Allegro



If in Ex. 5 we ignore the accompaniment for the moment, the oboe tune gives the impression of E minor, with a modulation to the unrelated key of D flat major in the second bar and a return to E minor at the end. The accompaniment seems to confirm that the keynote is E, but suggests that the mode is major. In the fourth and fifth bars there is the same contradiction between major and minor. Throughout the two bars before this example the chord of E major is heard, but in the fourth and third bars before the example there are false relations produced by major and minor chords of E in alternation. We may conclude that the passage is intended as a blend of major and minor.

Ex. 5

The musical score for Ex. 5 consists of three staves. The top staff is for Oboe (Ob.), the middle for String (Str.), and the bottom for String & Flute (Str. & Fl.). The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 2/4. The Oboe part features a melodic line with chromaticism, starting on E4, moving to D-flat4, then to E4, and ending on E4. The String part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords that suggest both major and minor modes. The String & Flute part also provides accompaniment, with some melodic fragments.

Before leaving this example it is worth noticing that despite its chromaticism all the intervals of the oboe melody are perfectly vocal and none is larger than a perfect fourth. The extreme modulation is effected quite simply and then the oboe promptly "returns to base". Several of the themes of the Symphony begin and end on the keynote (Ex. 1 and 5), whereas others start from the keynote and end on the dominant (Ex. 4). The gravitational pull of tonic and dominant is strongly felt throughout the work, not only in the individual themes. Even if there is an ambiguity of mode the sense of key is strong.

Seldom do Cooke's melodies leap by as much as a sixth. Generally the intervals are small and vocal; perfect fourths and thirds are frequent, and falling thirds occur in several of the themes. An identical series of falling thirds and a superficial resemblance between the themes in which they occur is to be found in a subsidiary theme in the first movement and in the principal theme of the finale (Ex. 4), but the resemblance between the two is not deliberate. One theme however is used in both of the middle movements. This is the beginning of the subsidiary section (or second subject group) of the scherzo which reappears with altered rhythm as the principal theme of the *Lento ma non troppo*. The composer was unaware of this resemblance until it was pointed out to him.

Cooke says that any resemblances in the themes of the Symphony are unintentional, and makes the following suggestion: "In a long work one idea tends to beget another, and certain sequences of notes are apt to recur. But I don't personally regard these similarities as of much importance, as obviously it is the character and feeling of the melody as a whole which counts." But he adds: "one's mind tends to dwell on certain successions of notes, which may

have a significance for the work as a whole". Cooke relies on unity of style and texture to unite the separate movements into a whole, and he has ample individuality of style to achieve this. The quotations already given show that the themes are varied in character and mood. Cooke never appears to be at a loss for a musical idea.

Some of the themes are suited to harmonic treatment, and others after first appearing with a simple accompaniment are repeated in canon, perhaps with one part inverted. Ex. 6 shows a melody which uses all the notes of the chromatic scale except E flat treated strictly in canon by inversion for a bar and a half by flute and oboe.



The last E (marked with a star) corresponds to the final note of the melody as it first appeared a fifth lower than it does here, the keynote being A formerly. This is an example of a highly chromatic melody beginning and ending on the tonic. This melody can hardly be said to be either major or minor. Major chords of A are heard before and after the melody as it first appeared, but these merely confirm that A is the tonic.

Some of the canons are not as smooth harmonically as this one. In the scherzo the oboes have the main subject simultaneously a major third apart, while the first bassoon has the same theme a bar later an octave lower than the second oboe; a pedal E flat is played by violas and cellos at the same time. In two bars the following clashes occur as the oboes and bassoon go on their relentless way:



Harmonic tensions of this kind, but generally less persistent and violent, occur from time to time during the course of a theme, but vanish as it reaches the cadence (see Ex. 5). The most striking use of dissonance in the whole work is heard in the development of the first movement when the principal theme (Ex. 1) returns as shown in Ex. 2.

Nikisch and Method in Rehearsal

BY

ADRIAN C. BOULT

ARTUR NIKISCH died in 1922, and his last appearance in London was in 1914. He has therefore become a legend—though I am glad to say that there are many distinguished members of London orchestras who remember him well—but he will I suppose soon be forgotten. Before this happens I feel I must put on record an impression, based on six months' close watching, of his method, particularly in the rehearsal room, for its economy and effectiveness have no equal in my experience, and should not be lost.

To begin with, he made his stick say more than any other conductor that I have ever seen. Its power of expression was so intense that one felt it would be quite impossible, for instance, to play *staccato* when Nikisch was showing a *legato*. There was no need for him to stop and ask for a *sostenuto*—his stick had already pulled it from the players, and so on, with almost every kind of nuance. It followed, then, that a most sensitive left hand could be used (albeit most sparingly and economically) to supplement the expression shown by the stick, and so there seemed that very little was left for verbal explanation.

Now when verbal explanation was necessary, Nikisch would rarely pull the orchestra up, then and there. He would play on probably to the end of a movement, by which time there might be several passages to be discussed—these could be dealt with together and the passages re-played if necessary, though he would often trust his players to remember a point once he had spoken of it, and saw no need to insist on hearing it again. Toscanini, in shorter movements, often used the same method on his London visits, playing the movement right through, and then taking up any points that needed rehearsal.

I am convinced that this method enormously saves strain to the whole orchestra—surely these rehearsal stoppages are like jamming brakes on suddenly and jerking a fine car to a standstill—and also, if the work is not well known, enables the players to get a first impression in one whole, instead of having it continually broken up. The conductor may have to keep half a dozen points in his head at once, and remember the references quickly when the time comes, but what is that to the housewife whose shopping list is in her head? I feel, too, in this connection, that with a new work, first impressions are of great importance. Now if this first impression is a string of short bursts punctuated by long dissertations on tonal balance, technique, colour, or anything else, the result in the mind of the player will hardly contribute to the long view and continuous sweep of a fine performance. The architecture of a work is of fundamental importance—so fundamental that it should be made clear to everyone at the outset, and left so firmly in the mind of the player that he conveys it of necessity—even if unconsciously—to the audience.

This becomes an impossibility if every bar has to be closely examined before anyone knows how the work is going to end.

There may sometimes be points of style that are better settled at the outset; the opening figure of the *Allegro* of the Schubert "Great C major", for instance, is worth stopping over at once, to get its bowing fixed once and for all. I remember many years ago, a distinguished guest conductor spending the first eighteen minutes of a rehearsal worrying over a difficult *arpeggio* in bar 6 of a work. The section of the orchestra concerned with the *arpeggio* consisted mostly of some fairly hard-boiled old hands, whose attitude to the work, to the conductor, and to life in general was considerably soured by the experience; and a few shy girls, who were so petrified with fright that their contributions to the performance were reduced to something infinitesimal. The disastrous psychology of this was not remedied until the great man had gone home three days later.

In Leipzig Gewandhaus Nikisch also had the Wednesday morning Public Rehearsal in which to work. There was a general impression that this was exactly like the concert; in fact rehearsal-goers used sometimes to give themselves airs, and criticize the well-dressed evening audience as fashionable and non-musical. Nikisch evidently did not subscribe to this view, for he would rehearse quite blatantly in front of the rehearsal audience. He never stopped, but with left hand and eyes would indicate for instance that something had been far too loud, and should be corrected at the performance. His preliminary rehearsals (which we students had the privilege of attending) would be devoted to the more out of the way things on the programme. The standard classic might not be touched at all—or perhaps only a few chosen passages taken. The rest, and all concertos, were tried for the first time at the Public Rehearsal, a procedure not always satisfactory to the more fussy and garrulous soloists!

In later life Nikisch had a curious aversion from studying scores. He was always ready to do new works, but said that he could not think out his interpretation from the cold print, but must have the living sound under his hand. I sat next George Butterworth when Nikisch took the second rehearsal of the *Shropshire Lad* at Leeds. At the first rehearsal he had gone through it and afterwards Butterworth had asked for several slight modifications. Nikisch agreed, but did not re-rehearse then: however ten days later he had remembered them all, and George could truthfully say that he had nothing further to suggest: the performance was exactly as he wished it.

His study methods (or lack of them) described above, were once the target of that inveterate practical joker, Max Reger, who, just before Nikisch was going to start the first reading of a new work of his, shouted up from the hall "I say, Nikisch, may I suggest that you just run through the big double fugue before you play the work right through?" "Certainly, my friend" was the reply, "Gentlemen, we will begin with the big double fugue", as he turned over the pages to find it. Unfortunately there wasn't a fugue in the work at all—Reger, in pulling the leg of the great conductor, was also giving his own a good tug!

It was said that the first bar of *Tristan* was enough to enable anyone to

recognize blindfold the warmth and beauty of tone which unmistakably showed that Nikisch was conducting—these things cannot be described, but there is no doubt that he fully understood Wagner's postulate: that there must always be at least one singing line in any music; the power to call this up also lay in that wonderful stick, and once he knew an orchestra he would rarely demand any special tension at rehearsals.

Here again it would seem that his practice is in danger of being forgotten for ever. All the great conductors of the present day seem to demand a hundred per cent intensity from players all through every rehearsal. This may be necessary with the Latin and Southern European types who form the majority in American orchestras, but I am convinced that with the more cold-blooded, matter-of-fact, British, Dutch and Scandinavian mentalities it is not necessary—indeed it is dangerous to demand full intensity during a long rehearsal on the day of the concert, and those of us who were privileged to hear Toscanini's London rehearsals in 1939 felt that he too sensed this. No one expects a footballer or a boxer to exercise at full pressure for three hours on the day of an important match, and it seems hardly wise with orchestral musicians. Nikisch's rehearsals were always peaceful, almost uneventful; only once did I see him lose his temper, and rarely did he ask for more tone—he knew that that would come when wanted, and when called for by his stick.

I remember Toscanini saying "I never rehearse again anything that has once gone well". This excepted of course the final rehearsal, at which he always plays through the whole programme. I think it is true of all artistic matters that they can never stand still: there must always be improvement or the other thing; and where rehearsal is concerned, the moment one reaches the peak, the bogey of staleness begins to rear its head. Toscanini is a most economical rehearser. He was given a generous schedule in London, it is true, but he often stopped the rehearsal an hour early, and he actually cancelled one or two altogether. A member of the Philadelphia orchestra told me recently that Stokowski also used to rehearse most sparingly, and the weekly scheme was usually after this pattern: Monday: straight through the programme; Tuesday: hard work on difficult spots (rarely more than two hours); Wednesday: reading new music; Thursday: straight through the programme, often with only a few comments. The concerts took place on Friday and Saturday.

Another aspect of conducting in which Nikisch's practice differed from that of most of his colleagues was when he was conducting as a guest—and here too his practice seems to be near that of Toscanini. It would seem that a stranger, conducting an orchestra for the first time, prepares, if possible, to extract from his players a performance which coincides in every detail with the perfect performance which his imagination conjures up. In many cases this will mean total destruction of an orchestra's basic style: the possibility of a Viennese conductor preparing a Mahler, or even a Beethoven symphony with a Parisian orchestra might be quoted as an example. I can also remember two disastrous rehearsals when a distinguished foreigner (whose conducting days are now over) tried to make the B.B.C. orchestra play the *Enigma* Variations "as Sir Elgar told us he wished in 1908". A critic afterwards said that he

seemed to have succeeded in utterly destroying the B.B.C. orchestra's fundamental ideas of the Variations, and had evidently not had enough rehearsal time to rebuild his own conception on top.

Nikisch would never do this. He would play well into the movement—perhaps right through it—before interrupting or commenting. He would then have seen and grasped one or more fundamental points of style where he probably felt the orchestra's playing to be furthest removed from what he felt was right. He would then take great pains to alter this at a few crucial spots, and might (if time was short) leave many other similar passages to be adapted by the players themselves. So, with a minimum of friction and discomfort to the players, he could achieve a large measure of success, and bring the performance much closer, at any rate, to his ideal.

Nikisch had a great sense of tact and contact with those with whom he was working, and M. Inghelbrecht tells in his recent book how Nikisch used to say that the mentality of different members of the orchestra varied usually with the instruments they played, and that he could speak in a much more subtle and delicate way to a player on the oboe or a string leader, whereas he would put the point at issue considerably more forcibly if he was talking, say, to a player on a heavy brass instrument.

I hesitate to give advice to colleagues with equal experience to my own, but I think any orchestral player would agree that the main points I have described: avoidance of stoppages, and reduced intensity at rehearsals, would, if practised in greater measure, much ease the strain for each individual musician; and a greater continuity in playing, alternating with an intensive rehearsal of those passages that are found to need hard work, will enable the conductor to get results in a far shorter time, with less tension all round. He only needs to develop the capacity to keep in his head a list of the points to which he must go back. Nikisch, as far as I know, never wrote a line about his work, so I hope that these few notes may help others, particularly those who inherit some of his genius, to profit by his experience and his practice, which are still so vividly admired by all who remember him.

Principles of Opera Design

BY

JOSEPH CARL

How often have I wished to be able to write, not merely to read, about the principles of my own job. Now, invited to contribute an article on the principles of stage design for opera, I realize that, on the whole, writers should do the writing and designers the designing.

For we designers do most things by instinct, not on principle. It is the reviewers who tell us what principle we have followed, rightly or otherwise.

Trying to write on principles, I have to analyse my own attitude when faced with the task of designing *décor* for an opera.

So let me, step by step, look into myself as I try to settle the problem.

When I designed *Rigoletto*—but no. *Rigoletto* is an "easy" opera. I must pick a harder example to arrive at more generally valid results. Perhaps it might be as well to disregard any production that I fondly imagine to have been a success, *Don Pasquale*, *Tales of Hoffmann*, *Bartered Bride*, *Pauvre Matelot*, *Barber of Seville*, *Magic Flute*. . . .

Salome! That is the right example. That opera was one of my failures. I designed a setting for it a year ago and submitted it to Covent Garden. It was turned down. It was so unsuccessful that it did not even see the footlights. But the design will serve as a demonstration piece.

I knew the opera. I had heard and seen it on continental stages. I knew Wilde's text, and I also knew the music. But I re-read the book, and I asked a friend to play the music to me again and again on the piano.

My first problem cropped up: How would a 1949 audience react to the music? And what type of setting would be the most suited to serve as a foil to that music, to let the listener be most profoundly impressed by Richard Strauss' creation?

A stage set belongs to ephemeral art rather than eternal. Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, derided by contemporaries, has become the marvel of later generations. The same happened to the works of El Greco, of Van Gogh and others.

Can a stage designer emulate the independence of a Rembrandt or a Van Gogh? Clearly he cannot. His work must satisfy his contemporaries. It will not be given a second chance five, fifty or five hundred years hence. Like the cartoonist, the designer scores at once or not at all. He must, repeat MUST, consider his audience. His work must not merely be art. It must be popular art. And popular art, or rather its appeal, is not completely timeless.

Result: My design for *Salome* must give the opera-goer of 1949 or 1950 the chance to feel the weird, grotesque, possibly perverse characteristics of the Wilde-Strauss creation.

Now, if I surround the weird goings-on of the *Salome* story and music with

a weird outer world, everything that happens within that world will strike the sophisticated contemporary as perfectly normal.

Events as reflected in the music will be the weirder the more normal, the more real (by our accepted standards) the optic surroundings are rendered by the designer.

My setting would not out-*Salome Salome*. It would emphasize the opera's intensity by a background of apparent normality. Instead of employing the artistic means of harmony, I would use the instrument of contrast. Realizing that in opera the music comes first, and everything else afterwards, will stop me trying to compete with, or outyell, the composer. That apparent modesty will give me no inferiority feelings, being the mere designer. But I should warn young and hopeful designers that I have often angered and alienated producers and directors of opera by paying the greatest attention to the views of the—conductor! As, in the practice of theatre life, it is the producer and not the conductor (or musical director) who picks the designer, my great respect for the conductor and his interpretation of the opera to be staged has cost me many a commission. Therefore I must condemn as practically and tactically wrong a principle that I still uphold as artistically sound. With a good producer, of course, it will not do any harm. For he will be completely hand in glove with the conductor. It is hell for the designer to work with a producer who has only qualified respect for the conductor. Either you play with the producer. Then the show goes wrong. Or you heed the conductor's views. Then you may whistle for your next job.

I hope readers will condone the digression. But opera-goers should know about a designer's quandaries and tactical problems.

Assuming that my ideal producer and conductor have so far approved of my views on *Salome*, I turn back to my job of fitting the roof terrace of a Judean Palace, with a banquetting hall off-stage, and a cistern—which can convincingly serve as Jokanaan's dungeon—into one setting: always keeping in mind that the music and plot are exotic-bizarre, with, perhaps, a streak of perversity.

A palace is easy. A cistern is not. For it is basically a hole in the ground. The stalls might not see it at all. What should an oriental cistern, that can be seen at eye level, look like? Before I know that it is no use worrying over the ground plan.

Research shows that oriental cisterns are often walled in. The wall would most likely be circular. That is a good lead. An outer as well as an inner circular staircase built on to the wall will serve the characters that have to get into and out of the cistern.

At that point I remember having seen a circular cistern in Ravenna. It was covered with a tiled roof, supported by four very low squat round pillars. Of course, that roof was not biblical or even Roman. It was Early Christian or Romanesque—as you would expect in Ravenna.

It might not be bad symbolism, contrasting an Early Christian cistern of Jokanaan with the pre-Christian oriental palace of Herod.

But who on earth would see that symbolism? Better drop it.

Still, there is something to be said for dividing the stage optically into different worlds. Jokanaan's and Herod's in the foreground, with the Jews, or biblical Judaea, in a valley at the back.

I divide the foreground into two unequal areas: the smaller, to the right, around the cistern, coloured olive-green and grey (the ground to be seen only from boxes, dress circle and galleries), the other, around the palace, on the left, coloured a dark terracotta.

The cistern—without the roof—is the same colour as the ground. Its design is enriched by a catwalk running up to its rim. The guards will look good pacing the catwalk.

The palace, its simple strong lines symbolizing the solid power of Herod's Roman-backed government, is dark terracotta in its lower part, brightening up into vermillion as it rises. That colour scheme is not merely symbolical. The lower parts of the palace will serve as a background to the singers. Those singers and their costumes must be seen. They would be swallowed up or out-shone by a brilliantly coloured background. The characters must be put against a low-key background. Use your strong high-key colours where no characters or costumes will have to compete: in the higher regions, for instance.

The background, Judaea, is depicted as a biblical town and landscape, in the *grisaille* of a Mantegna. (Never be ashamed of using good "copy".)

To get the right lighting effects in the sky, I would not use Covent Garden's cyclorama which hangs down limply and shows folds when fully lit. I would use several layers of gauze backed by transparent linen cloth.

Features of the palace are a two foot high platform, five feet in depth (spacious enough for Salome's dance) and a majestic open staircase turning to a nine foot high terrace on which the pillars of the banquet hall are planted. Underneath the hall is a low round archway leading to the soldier's guard room. Branching off from the staircase at half its height are bastions cutting back into the depths of the stage—considerable at Covent Garden, and still enhanced by false perspective. Guards will be posted on the bastions. The blades of their lances will reflect the light of the moon against the greyish-blue mist of the background.

Now it may be said that my Judaea is rather italianate. A trifle in the tradition of Umbrian and Venetian painting. Perhaps. But why not? Richard Strauss himself suggests the idea in *Josephslegende*. The Western world has been used for half a millennium to see the Old as well as the New Testament against backgrounds and costumes of the Italian Renaissance.

That brings me to the *Salome* costumes. Just as my setting must not outshine the costumes, the costumes themselves must allow the singers to be themselves, to move freely, to sing unhampered, and show expression through mimics and gesture. Surrealist or expressionist costumes look stunning on paper. They drive singers and actors to despair on the stage. And they make not only the very low-brow snigger.

Does that mean that I uphold the traditional as against the experimental, soundness as against imagination, solidity as against levity in design? Of course not. There is a time and place for everything. I myself have let myself

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Salome

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go more than once. Some readers will have seen the current *Faust* at Sadler's Wells. I thought (and producer and music director concurred) that a non-traditional approach was needed to get work and audience away, as far as possible, from outdated Victorian notions and a visual prejudice in favour of the gothic middle ages. In that case, we held, the experimental attitude was justified and safe. After all, Gounod is neither grotesque nor perversely exotic.

But frankly, I do not altogether regret that Covent Garden put Dali's *Salome* on the stage. Though I still think that my design would have been nearer to Richard Strauss, I must admit that the Dali settings have whipped up popular interest in opera design, that the public controversy has been creative in effect, and that the Garden has meanwhile put on productions that will pass muster by any standard anywhere in the world.

All will be well, if "modernism" or "experimentalism" is not now turned down out of hand. For the first principle of designing for opera is still that each work must be considered entirely by itself.

Some Problems of Music Criticism*

BY

GEOFFREY SHARP

THE art and craft of music criticism, for it is both, are dying out. *The Times* of 26th January confided that Berlioz' *King Lear* Overture is an absurd piece of music and quoted Tovey's description of it as mendacious, in apparent support of the paper's official pronouncement. Now, Tovey should never be quoted as infallible and was, for example, himself ready to admit that the errors in the music examples in his famous *Essays in Musical Analysis* were due to his preference for drawing on a well-stocked, if inexact memory rather than laborious verification from printed scores of themes and ideas only imperfectly remembered. An eminently human failing.

Tovey used to describe himself as counsel for the defence, though he did not add that his defences often admitted more reservations to his client's case than would be expedient for a successful K.C. In Berlioz, however, I seemed to remember that he would seldom, if ever, concede any serious artistic solecism and I doubted if he could have intended the slur that *The Times* imputed to him. Carefully I re-read the relevant *Essay*,¹ from which the word mendacious is conspicuously absent. The strongest support I can find for the *Times* critic's choice of this word—for we see now that the choice must have been his—lies in the following passage:

... According to the title of the work, you ought to read Shakespeare's *King Lear* to find out the meaning of the music. But no one who has any independent power of following Shakespeare as drama and Berlioz as music will waste five minutes over the attempt to connect Berlioz's *King Lear* with Shakespeare's. . . .

In short, we shall only misunderstand Berlioz's *King Lear* Overture so long as we try to connect it with Shakespeare's *Lear* at all.

Musically, there is nothing mendacious, lying, untruthful or false in all this: and our critic was supposed to be writing music criticism. I cannot believe that Berlioz would have objected in the least to what Tovey has written, but he would object to being described as (musically) mendacious and to his Overture being described as an absurd piece of music.

Everyone who has read Berlioz' prose writings knows that he possessed a fine literary talent; by which I mean that he had a fertile imagination for situations, anecdotes and simple melodramatic plots, and that the verbal clothing with which he decorated his skeletal frameworks invariably shows the style of a master. Some of his extravagant prose inventions certainly entitle him to a crown of literary mendacity almost comparable with that of the brothers Grimm. But falsehoods in prose and falsehoods in music are as different as chalk and pre-war Stilton.

* A paper read to the Oxford University Discord Club on 9th February, 1950.

¹ Volume IV: pp. 82-86. (O.U.P.) 1936.

Of literary mendacity, then, let Berlioz stand convicted; but the musical mendacity of the performance² reported by *The Times* lay in the quirks of Sir Thomas Beecham's reading. Of course, the Albert Hall manhandles all music that comes its way and what one hears depends outrageously on where one sits; yet Beecham's performance showed some extravagant divergences from the Paris (Richault) edition of the score which, to the best of my belief, is authoritative apart from some printing errors, most of which are too obvious to mislead a moron. Beecham employed an exceptionally wide range of dynamics, and while I am the last to commend the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra's utility practice of *mezzoforte* in perpetuity, too wide a dynamic range in the Albert Hall is liable to defeat its own ends; for example a really fierce *sforzando* chord has to be followed by a long rest, regardless of the composer's intention, if the audience is to have any chance of hearing the passage immediately following.

I do not know where the *Times* critic sat, nor can I estimate with any degree of exactitude what he heard; yet despite our unknown quantities, I think you may agree that he emerges as a not particularly cautious man.

The Daily Mail of the same date informed us that Berlioz' Overture has little or nothing to do with Shakespeare's play, rather as if their reporter had made a discovery. Not criticism, you may say. Exactly!

As with so many artistic, cultural and other skilled or semi-skilled pursuits (apart from scientific research in the field of more and more lethal instruments of destruction), the rot set in in 1939. Up to that time most of our National and some provincial papers set aside a regular and reasonable allocation of space for music criticism, and while some of this, even then, amounted to nothing more than mere ephemeral journalism thinly disguised, there was sufficient good, sound, knowledgeable writing to enable those of us who are jealous of our craft to sleep at night. Neville Cardus' full account in *The Manchester Guardian* of the previous evening's Hallé concert in the Free Trade Hall, Harry Colles' "wind blowing where it listed" in his *Times* concert notices and the Friday articles which one could not afford to miss, and Ernest Newman—one of the surest rocks on which the circulation of *The Sunday Times* has been built: I almost said "founded". Of these to-day only the last remains.

The dismal chain of events at the beginning of the war needs but the briefest comment: closed concert halls in the early days, half-baked jingoes trying to shelve the Arts for what they dared to call the better times to come, newspaper editors turning away from sincere, thoughtful and well-considered criticism in favour of news items and divorce or any other kind of scandal connected with the performing artists; finally the war-time space restriction which many of my colleagues have complained was the unkindest cut of all. But was it?

Admittedly it may not be possible to compress a detailed, authoritative and designedly helpful destructive criticism into a mere ten lines or less of single column newsprint. Lack of the necessary space in which to expand the arguments leading to an adverse judgment will therefore inevitably operate in

² Royal Philharmonic Society's concert, Albert Hall, 25/1/50.

favour of the performer's personal vanity and equally inevitably tend to put our music critic off his critical stride. But the solution to this problem is not, emphatically, to write nonsense. Many of our alleged critics have done just this in recent years, some still do; a few always will.

In this way they have made good progress towards hanging themselves—they have at the least slipped the noose round their own necks—and it is little use to squeal now because editors will not provide proper space for criticism, when the editors have probably thought very little of what the critics have submitted to them in the past few years. English newspaper criticism has gone into a steep decline and the awful example of the Gadarene swine looms ominously before us.

I have spent some time on newspaper criticism because it reaches a larger public, whether it is read or not, than do the specialized journals, some of which really have something to offer. We may console ourselves by recognizing the fact that in music, as with all other special skills, it is not the newspapers to which the specialist turns for the amplification and enhancement of his own grasp of essentials.

What are the fundamentals of good criticism? Surely that the critic should understand what he is writing about: that he should be able to write, and that what he writes should be readable. You will be in no danger of taking my last two requirements for hendiadys if you are familiar with modern American musicological practice. Some young American scholars can write, after a fashion, and it is sheer insularity on our part to expect them to write English (why should they?), but they are not as a rule willing or able to take the trouble to make their work readable.

I am not suggesting the formation of a new school of criticism of the "in at one eye, out at the other" variety, but rather the cultivation of a technique designed to produce a result midway between the dreary mediocrity of hack journalism and the equally profitless, because utterly uninteresting, displays of phenomenal erudition, couched in pidgin-American or Englisch-Deutsch, and prepared, it would seem, with the sole object of demonstrating the omniscience of some self-inflated *musikgelehrter* who, did he but know it, has simply wasted his time. It is impossible to write really readable prose on any subject in which you are not particularly interested, and our *musikgelehrter*, I am afraid, is too often interested only in himself.

But, to return to our first essential: that the critic should understand what he is writing about. This is the rock on which a whole host of shoddy vessels have been wrecked in the past and more are going aground all the time. All would be well, of course, if prospective hirers would refuse boats with holes in them! There would be so much less bilge to bale.

The ignorance, prejudices and other follies of Sir Walford Davies' "ordinary listener" are of little or no consequence to the world at large, so long as this ordinary listener does not impose his cretinism on our credulous, semi-literate

concert-goers and "musical" hangers-on, by means of *feuilletons*, gossip paragraphs, snatches of "musical" appreciation and those other minor nuisances that constitute the stock-in-trade of the riff-raff who are to-day replacing the music critics of the past.

Under these conditions it was characteristic that at last year's Salzburg Festival what was in greatest demand from British Press representatives was not criticism of the Festival performances so much as news items about the Earl of Harewood and Miss Marion Stein. Such confusion of values may be a sign of the times, but it was depressing that few of our Press "critics" appeared to resent or even to notice it.

I have said "characteristic" because in music criticism (if I should not say journalism) as with other commodities, the available supply has a considerable effect on the public demand. A public that has become used to seeing fantastic pictures of Victor de Sabata in action and to reading fanciful, highly-spiced journalese purporting to describe his histrionic displays in front of an orchestra, may be forgiven, though not excused for failing to realize that these outward and visible signs may bear witness to an inward and spiritual grace of an altogether exceptional order. This conductor's work is never less than interesting, while he is liable from time to time to shatter our complacency over music we thought we knew.³

A state of general awareness, with all one's intellectual and imaginative faculties at full stretch, is essential to a true enjoyment of music; and here I offer no apology for repeating what I have written elsewhere: *what else is music for?* The proper function of a music critic is to show his readers or listeners, who are supposed to know less about the art than he does, how they can develop their own powers of enjoyment. This means that the critic must himself enjoy music, apart from the fact that he would not understand it if he didn't. Many of our critical mandarins are dreary old men, tired, dispirited, bored and complacent; some of them still able to summon up a smile at a breath of slander or intrigue, but hardly one, alas, capable of even pretending to enthuse over his work. It isn't done: one mustn't talk shop. One talks or pretends to listen to drivel instead. This social convention reflects an appalling light on those who practise it. Surely even the most decadent social climber would boggle at admitting that it was more correct to talk rot than to tax one's neighbour's brain: though for most people it is undeniably simpler.

Music criticism is not simple at all. A blend of understanding, imagination, intuition and memory, it must be built on a solid foundation of sheer knowledge and it is imperative that the critic should be a man of wide general culture. An ample measure of first hand artistic experience, including a fair proportion at the highest level, is also a *sine qua non*.

Culture, imagination and understanding are at a discount in the age of the common man; but there are other reasons why current criticism has sunk so low. Formerly there existed at least an element of tradition in English criticism; there was also a deal of pretentious rubbish written outside the tradition,

³ E.g. Elgar's *Enigma* Variations.

but in those days little things amused little minds and trash journalism found its own level. Unfortunately, during the past decade upholders of the old standards have disappeared, the standards themselves have been mislaid and a number of young pretenders are trying to establish themselves; hoping, no doubt, that their smart-alec airs will camouflage their inexperience. What happens is exactly the reverse.

This raises a problem which is both important and difficult: one with which I have considerable sympathy. Suppose a young man feels a desperate urge to become a music critic, how is he to set about it?

Ideally there should be some school, college or institute where he can learn his craft, but there isn't; secondly, there is the problem of making a living during those first apprentice years while he is gaining experience, when no educated reader could derive pleasure, instruction or any other benefit from our would-be critic's growing pains.

There are in or around London to-day a number of otherwise worthy young men whom I could instance as victims of an awful and increasingly prevalent disease: diarrhoea of the pen. In youth there is no real harm in it except that it can be unsettling to the victim's peace of mind; what remains unforgivable is to inflict this ill-considered and only partially digested product on an unsuspecting reader. Manners apart, the reader will soon cease to be unsuspecting.

But to return to the training of our young critic: a classical education provides an excellent general background and discourages this diarrhoea, while some knowledge of current languages, at least German, Italian and French, will sooner or later be found essential. Here, then, we have a substantial part of the broad background I have already stressed. So far as childhood is concerned, it is most important that our embryo critic should become familiar at a very early age with music in performance, for what one learns young remains in the memory. So there should be early visits to opera, concerts and recitals, and our young hopeful should be made to learn an instrument; not that there is any need for a critic to be more than a moderate performer, as Colles and others have shown, but it is useful to know a little more about the piano, for instance, than is involved in finding middle C.

This matter of youthful spadework is comparatively straightforward provided that the child decides on his vocation while still shedding his milk teeth; but one can scarcely imagine the job of music critic kindling much of a child's enthusiasm compared with the assumed glamour of engine-driving, piloting a fighter, conducting an orchestra or even a bus. Thus it is that some of our critics are disappointed soloists or conductors of one kind or the other.

The young critic who is determined to make his mark will have to find his own way of so doing. To spend a couple of years at a college of music may be useful, though not necessarily entirely in the manner anticipated; whereas a spell of work assisting a first-class opera producer or orchestral conductor helps to set the seal of authority on a critic's pronouncements, an authority which is none the less real for being immediately apparent. It cannot be denied that

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critics are born and not made, and what I have just said should be regarded only in the nature of hints for development. I am *not* advocating music criticism as a bread-winning occupation! For a certain type of enquiring mind it has, however, a compelling fascination.

If this paper has so far seemed to consist of a series of partial digressions, their intent at least has been uniform: to indicate the complexity of the problems involved and to throw a light, perhaps in some respects revealing, upon the nature of music criticism. Scott Goddard has written that it's a job like any other;⁴ but surely that's just what it isn't! Like another, granted, in the sense that it demands our toil steadily and consistently whether we feel in critical fettle or not: an imponderable which I hope you will bear in mind in assessing our many errors of judgment; but this apart, and excluding the various petty frustrations which plague all concentrated forms of human endeavour, art criticism (applied in this context to music alone) must be recognized as a special function dischargeable only by specially equipped individuals.

There have been attempts in the past, notably by Ernest Newman and the late M. D. Calvocoressi, to earn for music criticism a higher degree of social respectability by having it classified as a science. Calvocoressi outlined three main considerations which, in his opinion, influenced the mental activity of the critic:

- (1) "predispositions"; (2) "direct data"; (3) "indirect data";

taking the first to be the critic himself, his personality, temperament, experience, prejudices and general background; the second, "direct data", to be the music as written and performed; and the "indirect data" to cover all the various accessory facts, *e.g.* a critic's specialized knowledge or unduly abysmal ignorance of a particular subject.

Even so I do not believe that criticism can be analysed profitably on the basis of any statistical schedule, but rather that this painstaking system was evolved as a mistaken tribute to the value of practicality in art. Art that places any considerable emphasis on practical matters becomes not art but artifice; and one of the definitive attributes of fine art is that it should, like higher mathematics, remain utterly useless. In these materialist days there is a grave danger that a tradition of uselessness, even in the fine arts, may be confused with and taken as synonymous for perpetual fatuity by otherwise intelligent people who are deficient in artistic susceptibilities, and of these England harbours a great many.

This leads to the striking paradox that criticism to-day can and must prove its own immediate value by stressing and jealously guarding the avowed uselessness of what is vulgarly termed art music. The recent lamentable treatment of composers in Soviet Russia provides a possible alternative almost too horrible to contemplate, and let no one be fool enough to console himself, much less anyone else, with the reaction of idle complacency, "It can't happen here".

⁴ "One Man's Meat", in *Music & Letters*, January, 1937, p. 63.

Performance has declined, criticism has declined and more and more people of a progressively less educated order are taking an ever wider and ever shallower interest in the superficialities of subjects (such as the arts) which hardly one of them has the real capacity to master. This way man mocks his gods and the goddess of music has a habit of revenging herself on a blasphemous public by turning herself into a harlot.

The critic can help to ensure that the public does not blaspheme.

Some of the methods, such as safeguarding certain minimum standards of performance are obvious enough; but a few words about the critic's attitude towards new music may not come amiss. There are two principal reasons why the average music critic is not a particularly helpful guide in the matter of music being written here and now: first, that even the most ignorant critic has a nagging suspicion at the back of his mind that his forerunners came some nasty croppers in their caustic opinions of works we now regard as masterpieces; and in general to read oldtime music criticism should be a wonderful deflater of conceit in any modern exponent of the craft. The second reason, and one which has its bearing on the first, is that we can form our opinions of new and unfamiliar music only by comparison with what we already know. The late Ferruccio Bonavia, for example, himself a composer, an expert on matters of string technique and incidentally a great admirer of the music of Elgar, found insuperable difficulty in accepting Bartók's third Quartet as music. The performance in question was one of literally breath-taking brilliance by the Hungarian Quartet. The more or less symmetrical five movement design of the piece is masterly, but the idiom is on the whole uncompromising, with some strange effects which Mr. Bonavia certainly would not admit as music. He has referred, for instance,⁵ to the modern abuse of *portamento* as an imitation of lamenting animals, a sure indication that he would not approve Bartók's contrary motion *portamento-glissando*, or, for that matter, the curious whip-like noise made by plucking the strings and letting them fly back on to the sounding board. He was full of admiration of the players' skill, but also, when I dared to admit my own enthusiasm for the work, obviously disappointed in the folly of a young colleague. The probability, if indeed you admit it, that in this case I may have been right and Bonavia wrong is due, not to any startling perspicacity of mine but simply to the fact that there were nearly forty years between us.

We have been told for a number of years that there is a *renaissance* of British composition; a case of misplaced terminology, as so far as I can see there has not previously been a *naissance*. But it is true that we have some composers to-day, of whom the most significant are Vaughan Williams, Edmund Rubbra, William Walton and Alan Rawsthorne. None of these is much under fifty and I have yet to be convinced of the lasting vitality of any of the music being written by our younger men.

Many foreigners are decidedly sceptical about British composers; rightly

⁵ "Fiddlesticks", in *MUSIC REVIEW*, XI, 1, pp. 36-37.

I think, if you bear in mind the fuss we have made in the past about Purcell and other minor figures who are clearly not of the importance some of our apologists have ascribed to them. It would clarify the picture for our friends in other countries if we were to make up our minds what native music is worth exporting, concentrate on that and leave the rest of the rubbish to find its own level: it soon would and in any case will do so in time.

To sum up: I have tried to show that the presence and perpetuation of a living tradition is fundamental to the continued existence of good criticism. The musically ignorant journalist hacks away at his own level without altering this basic truth. Though it seems to me that this tradition is in danger owing to the grave scarcity of really good men.

The qualities necessary for good criticism are summarized in the *Harvard Dictionary*:

. . . Practical and theoretical knowledge of music in its various fields; literary talent; a wide spiritual horizon; a great feeling of responsibility; a character in which sensitiveness, benevolence, sincerity and fearlessness are coupled with tact and some degree of diplomacy; finally, that scent for the new, valuable and important which is the outstanding trait of the specific critical talent.

That was written by Hugo Leichtentritt and while in no sense discouraging, is sufficiently comprehensive and serious in character to send those of us who are already in the business back to first principles and to induce some careful thought into the ambitious youngster with critical leanings. I would be the last to discourage new recruits, but they should realize what they are undertaking before they start.

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Since this paper was set in type David Franklin has put the performer's point-of-view in an entertaining article in the April issue of *Hallé*.

Unesco's International Music Council

BY

PETER GRADENWITZ

WHEN Charles Seeger first set out the hopes, plans and demands of musicologists and musicians in connection with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),¹ he fittingly prefaced his article by a quotation from the Preamble to the Constitution of this international cultural agency: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed" and he concluded by warning that education, science and culture (arts and the humanities) are equally essentials for war "as the worst wars in modern times have been fought between nations that have been interchanging and understanding for centuries". Only a year later, Dr. Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo, the distinguished Brazilian music historian and folklorist who accepted the post as head of the Music Section in the Arts and Letters Division of UNESCO in Paris, was able to report on considerable preliminary activities of the international organization in the field of music.² In July, 1948, a small meeting of experts had taken place to discuss the preparation of a World Catalogue of Recorded Music; and the Beirut Conference of UNESCO accepted their recommendations ("provided that the Director-General should seek sponsors to bear the cost of publication") as well as the proposition dealing with the establishment of an International Music Institute and the resolution regarding the consideration of a Universal Tone Pitch. In January, 1949, the International Music Council was created in Paris by a meeting of music experts and representatives of international music organizations, and a Preparatory Commission of seven members was elected to deal with the administration of the Council until the first session of the General Assembly. Statutes and an initial Programme were drafted in the course of the year, subject to ratification and alteration by the General Assembly. The Preparatory Commission, which could count on the advice and service of the UNESCO Secretariat, consisted of M. Roland-Manuel (Chairman), M. Marcel Cuvelier (Secretary), Mr. Arthur Honegger, Mr. Charles Seeger; while M. Cuvelier represented the International Federation of Musical Youth, the three other organizations taking part were represented by Mr. Edward Clark (International Society for Contemporary Music), Miss Maud Karpeles (International Folk Music Council), and M. Paul-Marie Masson (International Society for Musical Research).

While the stage was being set for the first General Assembly, the UNESCO Secretariat began to realize some of the projects decided upon at earlier meetings. The first problem on the agenda was the compilation of a World Catalogue of Recorded Music: a permanent Central Card Index is being set up at Unesco House for all recordings of Western serious music and numbers already some 10,000 cards (February, 1950); selected lists of representative and instructive recordings of Eastern classical music are being prepared by special experts; and the International Commission on Folk Arts and Folklore is preparing lists of recordings of folk music found in museums, libraries, and universities. The first fruits of this work can already be seen: as a first volume presented by the "Archives de la Musique Enregistrée of UNESCO", a complete "discographie" of Chopin's music—with introduction and notes—has been prepared by M. Armand Panigel and published by the review *Disques* in November, 1949, in time for the Chopin Centennial celebrations. A similar volume on Bach is in preparation, while the Oriental Section is working on volumes listing recordings of Indian and Chinese music and the Folk Music Section on catalogues of the "Phonothèque Nationale" and of the collection housed in the "Musée

¹ Charles Seeger, "Unesco, February, 1948", in *Notes* (Music Library Association), Washington, Second Series, Vol. V, No. 2, March, 1948, pp. 165-168.

² Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo, "Unesco's Activities in the Field of Music", in *Notes*, Second Series, Vol. VI, No. 3, June, 1949, pp. 373-378.

de l'Homme" in Paris. The Chopin volume is an exemplary piece of bibliographical work, well illustrated and annotated and containing an Index of Performers.

No results have as yet been achieved in the field of the Universal Tone Pitch, on which a special commission is at work, but preliminary steps have been taken in some other fields, notably in education and the study of the social conditions under which musicians are working in our time. A survey in the latter sphere has yielded some four hundred replies, which are now being studied by UNESCO, with a view to using the results for far-reaching endeavours to assist musicologists and musicians as well as composers and in the establishment of international relations and travel possibilities. In education, UNESCO has included music in the syllabus of various seminaries; in Vienna this year "Art in Adult Education" will be discussed by international experts, while preparations are in full swing for a seminary to be held in or near Bath at the time of the Youth Festival prepared there for the Festival of Britain in 1951. In October, 1949, a Gala Concert was given at the Concert Hall of the Paris Conservatoire as an "Hommage à Chopin" and eleven works, commissioned by UNESCO from as many composers, were given their first performance; viz. "Tombeau de Chopin" by Tansman, "Hommage à Chopin" by Villa-Lobos, *Sonata española* by Esplà, *Etude-Caprice* by Ibert, *Suite polonaise* by Panufnik, *Pastoral* by Hanson, *Three Mazurkas* by Berkeley, "Hommage à Chopin" by Malipiero, *Estudio* by Chavez, *Mazurka-Nocturne* by Martinů, and "Ode à Frédéric Chopin" (to words by Nietzsche) by Florent Schmitt. This Memorial Concert was later recorded and is available to each broadcasting station for a single transmission. Lastly, UNESCO has undertaken the distribution of the International Music Fund, created by Dr. Serge Koussevitzky and the American Section of the I.S.C.M.; so far, two Polish composition students have been granted fellowships for study in Paris, and the recording of important contemporary works is to be carried out following recommendations by the thirty-five sections of the I.S.C.M.

If the International Music Council had not been encouraged by the preliminary work already undertaken by the UNESCO Secretariat and by the activities envisaged for the immediate future, the first General Assembly—held at Unesco House, Paris, from 30th January to 3rd February—might have been rather depressing. For it was soon learned that the budget allocated to the Council for 1950 was less than \$6,000, while about \$14,500 were expected for 1951; the materialization of more than twenty different programme items was hardly possible with such funds. Yet it soon became clear that UNESCO would undertake the financing of some projects of international importance on the strength of its general budget and demand from the International Music Council the use of its meagre funds for its more specific programme and administrative expenses only.

Twenty-one members of the International Music Council (some of them only elected at the General Assembly) were confirmed at the Paris meetings, the Council consisting (in conformity with the Statutes) of one representative of each international organization admitted to membership and of an equal number of musicians and musicologists selected on grounds of their international reputation and with due regard for a balanced representation of the various fields of music activity. Representatives of National Committees will be admitted only in a consultative capacity in order not to make the Council unduly large. The member organizations are the International Society for Contemporary Music (represented by Mr. Edward Clark), the International Society for Musical Research (M. Paul-Marie Masson), the International Federation of Musical Youth (M. Cuvelier), the International Folk Music Council (Miss Karpeles), the International Committee for the Standardization of Instrumental Music (M. Arthur Prévost), and the International Federation of Popular Societies of Music (M. A. Manouvrier); the elected Board consists of M. Roland-Manuel (President), Messrs. Arthur Honegger and Andrije Panufnik (Vice-Presidents), M. Marcel Cuvelier (Secretary-General), and M. A. Manouvrier (Treasurer); the remaining members are Professors Knud Jeppesen, Smijers, van den Borren, Torrefranca, and Messrs. Sem Dresden, Pierre Capdevielle, Brailoiu, Baud-Bovy, Saygun, Santa Cruz, Howard Hanson, and Charles Seeger.

Too large a proportion of the limited time at the disposal of the Paris Assembly was

devoted to constitutional matters and to the rules of procedure; this had become necessary as some decisive amendments to the draft statutes had been proposed by member societies and individual members of the Council. It would certainly have been more interesting to give more time to the discussion of the many-sided programme in the various fields of music and musical research and to exchange views on preparatory steps that could be taken by national delegates towards the materialization of projects which UNESCO is not prepared to finance as yet and which the Council will not be able to undertake for a long while because of its limited resources. National delegates were elected by the Assembly in twenty-one countries and five more will be chosen by the Secretariat after further consultation (one country, Hungary, notified the Assembly that she did not wish a delegate to be appointed; in the states where National Commissions of UNESCO are already in existence no special delegate had to be proposed by the central organization). Contrary to other United Nations organizations, these delegates are representatives of UNESCO in their own respective countries and not delegates of their countries to UNESCO. It can well be imagined, though one did not hear this proposed at the General Assembly, that these representatives will approach the musical societies in their countries or even their Governments with a view to attaining funds for a national materialization of international projects decided upon by the Council. The recording of valuable new music or of folklore, the publication of bibliographical matter, the exchange of artists, the support of composers to enable them to copy their works for performance, and the convening of international meetings could certainly be promoted by a number of UN member states without the Council's financial support, if only the necessary stimulus and moral support and some organizational help were to come forward from the central organization, while in other states the slightest addition to their own budget would produce a stimulating effect. Moreover, an efficiently elastic working of the Council could possibly synchronize the activities of societies all over the world and encourage composers and research workers to submit to the Council the fruits of their labour so that the world at large could benefit from their work. In the field of research it was suggested that a survey be made of all musicological treatises or major projects that were already completed or nearing completion but which their authors could not hope to publish for lack of funds; the present author knows of major projects, including important thematic catalogues of ancient music, in this very category, and certainly the mere knowledge of their existence would benefit fellow musicologists who could obtain photostats or microfilms of pages or chapters important for their own research. But the Council did not feel it could undertake a job of this kind at present.

It was urgently impressed upon the Council to devote special attention to one particular project in the field of research which cannot be postponed much longer. The ancient heritage of the Asiatic people, and of other civilizations, is in a grave danger of getting lost to the world—and to musical research—because of the ever-growing spread of film, radio, and recorded music. Some of the UNESCO projects, interesting and important though they may be, will be as valuable if done to-morrow as if completed to-day, but our failure to record the treasures of the Oriental heritage will result in our leaving future historians without the fundamental tools for comparative musicology. Traditions anxiously guarded for thousands of years are endangered and are already losing their character quite rapidly, and individual musicologists or even groups or institutes cannot possibly bear the entire burden of recording, sorting and cataloguing the vast material. It was interesting to note that apart from members of international organizations from various spheres of art two observers were present at the Paris meetings, both from countries that belong to the most ancient cultures and have attained statehood as the youngest members of the family of the United Nations, India and Israel; this was characteristic of the great concern these two cultural spheres show in the fate of the research branch of the International Music Council. A resolution was unanimously passed by the Council to include the establishment and support of a Near East Research Centre in the immediate programme, and much was said in favour of the suggestion that Jerusalem is an ethnographically and geographically suitable place for such an international Centre.

The programme decided upon by the International Music Council includes the following points: preparation of scores and parts of preclassical music for performance; new editions of invaluable source material (treatises on performance, etc.); preparation of a "Quellen-Lexikon" to replace and bring up-to-date the famous Eitner work; preparation of a supplement to the catalogue of libretti at the Library of Congress; preparation of a catalogue of ancient and modern works suitable for performance by orchestras of young people and amateurs, and also the commission and encouragement of new works specially written for such orchestras (including brass bands); the preparation of a Book of International Folk Songs, with a phonetic notation of the original texts and a translation in English, French, and Spanish; the recording of contemporary works; the copying and reproduction of scores by composers who experience difficulty in having them performed or published; the support of valuable periodical publications; the spread of folklore knowledge by the encouragement of research, meetings of specialists, liaison between organizations, and the sponsoring of publications; the establishment of microfilm libraries in various parts of the world; the publication of a series of records of folklore music that should prove of interest for all countries and could become a commercial project; the exchange of musicians and musicologists; the preparation of a large-scale conference, possibly in 1952, for the discussion of the problems of musical education, teaching and culture as a part of general education. The original UNESCO programme (survey of social conditions, World Catalogue of Recorded Music, universal pitch) will be continued by the Secretariat which will, of course, enjoy the advice and active help of the experts serving on the International Music Council. A new venture, undertaken by UNESCO in collaboration with the Radiodiffusion française, is the "Banc d'Essai"—a variation of the "Club d'Essai" idea, namely a monthly broadcast in which young composers are interviewed at the microphone and their works performed and recorded. It is desirable that this forum should be open to composers all over the world, who could record an interview with their respective national delegate in French or English as well as have their works recorded at home, while a general editor could select the material at the UNESCO Centre in Paris; the complete programmes could then be recorded in a sufficient number of copies and distributed to radio stations.

An important beginning has been made and a central organization created that demands the greatest respect and support of all those interested in the art of music, in musical research, and in the folklore of music. Music can indeed play an important part in the quest for world peace by bridging ideological, social and cultural differences between individuals, groups, and nations.

Hallé Concerts, 1950

BY

JOHN BOULTON

25th January

The interesting feature of this programme was Manchester's first hearing of Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra. It was also the most pleasurable part of a concert made up otherwise from Verdi's Overture to *Forza del Destino*, the Rondo from the *Haffner* Serenade and Beethoven's fifth Symphony.

Forza del Destino is played a good deal these days. Nowhere have we heard it performed more fluently than on this occasion, when especially fine playing was contributed by the brass choir. The Rondo from K.250 is not Mozart at his best and if this performance lacked life we did not feel that we were missing a great deal and had some sympathy for Laurance Turner that he should be the soloist on so undistinguished an occasion. It seemed to us that the general air of *ennui* about the performance was none of his fault. There was nothing remarkable about the C minor Symphony, until the finale. Then the old magic was made to work again and the glories of the composition and of the orchestra blazed together, briefly but joyously. If everybody present did not know that trombones are used only in the finale, they must surely know now. For the first three movements the principal trombone sat reading a book with a greatly detached air. Not even Beethoven's Fifth can stand this degree of nonchalance and we hope never to see its like again in an orchestra whose discipline is normally good; and although this offence was silent it was much more heinous than the noisy half bar of unscored trumpet we heard towards the close of the Scherzo.

Bartók's six year old Concerto is by far the most accessible of his big works. The appeal of its tunes and texture is immediate and its spirit is calculated to charm the simplest of civilized souls. The title is something of a mystery; in the second movement, inscribed "*Giucco delle Coppie*", the couples referred to are woodwinds and the game they play is one of follow-my-leader with intervals of a seventh between the clarinets, a sixth the bassoons and so on, variously, with the addition of two trumpets playing only a tone apart. All this provides genuine musical fun, most acceptable as such, but is the only reference throughout the whole work to *concertante* principles. Of the other four movements the "Introduction", which is no such thing, but is a finely wrought symphonic movement, and the Intermezzo, which compares with Holst's *Jupiter* in the beauty and completeness of its alcoholism, are outstandingly impressive. The last named proceedings include a hiccupped tune from *The Merry Widow*, and yet contrive to reach a telling and dignified close,—a very highly integrated jollification indeed. The whole work hangs well together; it is really a symphony and, as such, serves to offset the modern symphonic tendency which has been pessimistic in spirit, and towards highly inter-related structures. The instant appeal that this music made to the audience must have depended greatly on a performance which seemed flawless.

22nd February

On this occasion the advertised attraction was a disappointment. William Walton's violin Concerto demands a soloist with altogether more spiritual *bravura* than Frederick Grinke. It was not merely that his tone was small—and it was—nor that the virtuoso passages were not well realized—for they were—it was an overall mental attitude of refinement and restraint which is totally at variance with the feeling of the work. The quieter, lyrical passages were probably beautifully played; we could not hear them. Knowing his soloist, Sir John Barbirolli could have done more than he did to help him and us out of this shortcoming.

John Ireland's *Satyricon* got its first Hallé performance. It is a delicious overture, quite complete in all it sets out to do and most expertly scored. The title means not a thing and at least one listener enjoyed it hugely without having given a previous thought to Petronius or Nero or liking over-rich food and the company of small boys. As far as we could tell with no access to a score, the orchestra did the seventy-one year old composer very proud, in this, his latest work. *Don Juan*, which ended the programme, on the other hand, *must* be listened to with its hero in mind. A performance which began by being beautifully articulated, collapsed because the horns would not make their music tell. Particularly, of all Strauss' tunes and phrases and all the Don's thoughts and actions, the great shout of virile exultation, that most personal of all themes, which the horns should produce in the middle of the work, fell utterly flat. When will English conductors learn where lies the real climax of this work? When will they insist that horns provide it?

Haydn's eighty-eighth Symphony is very nearly his best; the Hallé players gave a lovely reading and Barbirolli got the right *tempo* for the finale which conductors in this country take too slowly.

8th March

Fernando Previtali conducted a programme the first half of which was the *Figaro* Overture, Cherubini's Symphony in D and the Bach piano Concerto No. 1 in D minor. Listened to in that order, these three works provided an absorbing essay in musical values. It became perfectly plain why 200 years after Bach's death he and Mozart are giants and Cherubini is a pigmy. The outward attributes of his music, *i.e.* the lay-out of each individual movement, the dynamic interrelations between the movements, the alternations of feeling, as achieved by simple key change and tempo variation, were all those which Haydn had used. The individual tunes, especially in the first movement, and in the very charming minuet and trio were good enough to be listened to for their own sake. Yet the music bored an ear which had just responded to *Figaro* and would be enchanted by the Bach Concerto.

The answer is a simple one. Cherubini knew what went to the making of a classical symphony, but did not know how to put the bits together. A hundred years later Tchaikovsky was to meet the same problem, but the bits of his symphonic jig-saws were to be so exotic in shape and colour that we accepted them as mosaics and another Romantic composer was born. Cherubini lived too early to have found this simple solution. We are grateful to Signor Previtali for bringing the Cherubini work to us because we like to re-learn those lessons. Not a great conductor by a long way, he is a sufficiently able musician to have let the many good things in the orchestra's playing speak for themselves and generally to guide the players in those ways which the wider aspects of each composer's style demand but without imprinting any kind of personality of his own upon the music. It was for this reason that comparison of the three works mentioned was made so easy; each was a good, impersonal, utility performance of the music as written. There were no high lights.

The conductor showed his greatest skill in Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony which ended the concert. He revealed a technique of transition from energy to repose which he should permit to form the basis of his ultimate conducting style. This capacity to hold a clear line of musical development between the highly charged tension of one moment and the nervous quiescence of the next is particularly required in the *Pastoral*.

The soloist in the Bach Concerto was Miss Monique Haas. She played with fluency and accuracy. When she can add strength and a greater degree of incisiveness she may expect to play music of this kind as well as she plays the more lightweight work of modern Continental composers.

The Hallé Concerts Society had on sale at this concert a broadsheet on the financing of the orchestra which all who are concerned to understand public, national and municipal responsibilities towards music should read.* In it we are reminded that the orchestra

* *The Future of the Hallé Orchestra*, by T. E. Bean.

has attained standards comparable with the highest in the world. We are then shown that, as things are, those standards cannot now be maintained and the reasons for this are given. The argument is well made and conclusive. But one reason is not mentioned: it is an important reason and this is as good a place to state it as any.

If this or any other orchestra is to attain the first rank it must be subjected, from time to time, to the influence of first rank guest artists, in particular conductors and concerto soloists. The visiting artists suffered by the Hallé Society in recent years have, with very few exceptions, fallen a long way below the standards of world distinction claimed for the Orchestra. If the lack of any mention of this problem means that the Society do not appreciate it, then they are under a grave illusion. If the problem is understood, it should be aired. Because it has not so far been possible for the post-war Hallé audience to hear their orchestra with any of the international figures, Ansermet, Beecham, van Beinum, Furtwängler, Karajan, Kletzki, Koussevitzky, Münch, Reiner, de Sabata, Szell, Walter and others, let us not pretend that these great men do not exist. Their most lasting contribution to art is the exercise of their genius upon the greatest number of worth-while instruments. Further, if members of the orchestra are to be told they are collectively in the first flight they have, as individuals, the right to keep better company than they do and enrich themselves by the experience. As an orchestra, the case for maximum contact with great executants is overwhelmingly clear.

These are the things we thought about, listening, as so often we have before, to flashes of almost unconscious greatness from an orchestra directed by one artist and accompanying another, neither of whom are yet recognizable as candidates for greatness.

22nd March

This year, as once before during John Barbirolli's conductorship, the Hallé Orchestra is playing all seven of Sibelius' symphonies. Tonight it was No. 6 in D minor and if anyone has doubts about Sir John's ability to secure, on occasion, first-class playing from his orchestra, measured by any contemporary standards, they cannot be amongst those who heard this performance. The sixth Symphony is the most complex of the series in that almost none of its beauties reveal themselves unless an alert mind at the rostrum can command response from musicians who have been made to know every note of the work and to anticipate every expression. Tonight's performance was as clear as the written score.

William Alwyn's oboe Concerto had its first Manchester performance with some masterly solo playing from Alec Whittaker. This is pleasant enough, with almost no excitement of any kind but considerable charm, and, so long as there are soloists able to make as much of it as Mr. Whittaker, we are likely to hear it again. The Hallé strings and harp had clearly been very well rehearsed and the composer must have been pleased with the result.

A "Free Arrangement" of the Gluck ballet music *Don Juan* showed how easily and ingratiatingly modern orchestration can wreck the spirit of a venerable composition. The argument seems to be that this music to *Don Juan*, which, incidentally, opened an epoch in the development of theatre music, was conceived romantically, and therefore can be romanticized without limit and with advantage. The truth is that these pleasant airs and four-square rhythms simply cannot carry the weight of Mr. Roy Douglas' invention. It should be realized that Handel and Bach can stand modern orchestration because of the inner strength, both rhythmic and melodic, which underlies their suites. With many another composer of pre-Haydn days, including Rameau and Couperin, Corelli and Scarlatti, as well as any number of Germans, there is not the inner strength to support modern orchestration and most arrangers' efforts compare as badly as this does with, say, the Handel-Harty orchestrations.

Strauss' *Till Eulenspiegel* and Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* were each given fair performances.

Film Music and Beyond

WILLIAM ALWYN: BAD AND GREAT WORK

I. BAD

It has been said that while Soviet musical life is black, American is grey. The observation still contains some of the oversimplification and avoidable bias it tries to exclude. The simplest possible and—from our, the Western standpoint—most unbiassed verdict would be that while Soviet industrial culture is, at any rate musically, dark grey with some white and many black patches, Western cultural industry is a lighter grey with more white and fewer black patches. In this country, the grey seems yet lighter, the white patches more, and the black patches less numerous than in America. Nevertheless, we shall do well to recognize the artistically harmful influence of our own big and not-so-big business: we must not underestimate the importance of economic factors as determinants of art and trash just because of their overestimation beyond the psychotic curtain. Nor indeed does the fact that would-be art created idealistically for the mob bears natural resemblances to what we produce unidealistically for money, make our own, capitalist, brand of Kitsch any more savoury.

The film is the incarnation of business in potential art. In order to realize the whole depressing meaning of this truism every film director and film musician should read Hanns Eisler's brilliantly intelligent and musical *Komposition für den Film* (Berlin, 1949; American edition: New York, 1947; English edition forthcoming [Dobson]), even though it contains more Marxist aesthetics than any musicologist trained in scientific method and acquainted with the results of the last 50 years' psychological and sociological researches will remain awake over. With a sweeping, communist stroke of the pen, too, Eisler throws Denham and Hollywood together, but it is precisely because his analysis tends to magnify our own sins that it usefully serves as a microscope. "Since its monopolization film music has fallen to culture, being at the same time not a grain more cultivated than it was in the age of its irrespectability. Its progress simply means that Kitsch has been roused from its lurking-places and has been enthroned as an official institution." (P. 57; my translation.) Repeat: That something intriguingly similar seems to have been the result of (*inter alia*) the Moscow conference of musicians at the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party in January, 1948, that in fact communist and capitalist delight in the same malpractices for seemingly opposite reasons, should not fill us with malicious joy, but should rather remind us that civilization as a whole is incapable of looking itself in the face.

As far as our own (film-) musical life is concerned, I have seen or heard no comment, let alone the overdue outcry, about the alarming fact that a leading member of our official musical institution *par excellence*, a professor of composition at the Royal Academy of Music who has quite rightly earned himself the reputation of being one of our most important film composers, has of late turned out not merely such indifferent scores as *Golden Salamander* and *Madeleine*, but also the reeking Kitsch that forms, if form is the word, the admittedly sparing background to *Cure for Love*. Three slightly extenuating circumstances might at the same time be brought forth in Professor Alwyn's defence.

First, Alwyn is in a somewhat precarious position in that his is an often reactionary idiom, looking back to the nineteenth century in, for instance, his recent Concerto* for oboe, strings and harp, or even to the eighteenth in his *Divertimento* for solo flute (of which I have not heard the whole), a *pastiche* with wrong notes duly injected—though here one must consider that one-part writing in any truly contemporary language except Schönberg's is up against the problem of how to avoid wrong and define right vertical implications. Now while not *a priori* to be despised, a reactionary idiom will even at its most

* See John Boulton's comment on p. 144 [ED.].

sincerely expressive turn out to have been written for the past, including, to be sure, the present inasmuch as it retains the past. For the progressive listener such music cannot have more significance than a previous age's small coin, while already at its second best it runs the risk of being rejected, or accepted, as false coin, in spite of the fact that the composer did not use base metal: It may be incapable of appearing what it is. Prophetic music finds itself in a similar situation—hear the observations on the "swindle" of twelve-tone music—but while its creators' tragedy is simply that they have the present against them, the retrograde composers' far more serious tragedy is that they have not got the past before them. On consideration it would, moreover, appear doubtful whether a regressive idiom can be invested with the same qualities of emotional, and the same quantities of spiritual intensities as a contemporary language. No mortal composer, that is to say, can altogether escape the shadow of a dead or dying *Zeitgeist*. It follows that an artist under the sway of *vis conservatrix* will, as seductive occasions arise, land more smoothly and unconsciously in Kitsch than his opposite number among the modernists. Only the greatest can safely risk being conservative because their temporal transcendence automatically makes them into revolutionaries anyway. All of which is to say that Professor Alwyn's abominable film score may contain inadvertent as well as merely, though inevitably, apparent Kitsch. But it must again be stressed that however genuinely and innocently conceived, anything that appears as Kitsch will by many be liked as Kitsch and is therefore to be considered toxic.

Second excuse: the film itself is hardly of a kind that would inspire, or indeed could make room for valuable film music. But then Professor Alwyn could either have declined the commission, or else his highly resourceful film-musical mind might have hit upon artistically less objectionable expedients such as folk material or, remembering the *Divertimento*, the comparatively harmless evil of retrospective one-part writing.

Last, Professor Alwyn's film-musical conscience is far more filmic than musical, and refuses therefore the help of a potential *vis medicatrix naturae*: his own intra-musicality. I hasten to add, however, that his highly developed film sense has in another recent instance, *The Rocking Horse Winner* (from the D. H. Lawrence story), contributed towards a downright revolutionary score, at once essentially filmic, original in musico-dramatic structure and—against his will?—musically fascinating: as great a piece of work, in fact, as his Kitsch seems base, and equally, *i.e.* wholly, unnoticed. Of this in the next issue.

H. K.

First Performances

THEIR PRE- AND REVIEWS

(1) Prokofiev, 6th Symphony. (2) Prokofiev, 4th Symphony. (3) Walton, violin Sonata. (4) Sauguet, *Symphonie Expiatoire*; Jani Christou, *Phoenix Music*. (5) Rudolf Mengelberg, *Capriccio* for piano and orchestra. (6) Britten, *Spring* Symphony. (7) Schönberg, string Trio. (8) Arthur Oldham, *Divertimento* for strings. (9) Arthur Oldham, violin Sonata. (10) Bach, 3rd *Brandenburg* Concerto with slow movement selected by Samuel Rosenheim.

The positive return of what has crumbled away proves to be more thoroughly pledged to the age's destructive tendencies than what is actually stigmatized as destructive. The order which proclaims itself is nothing but the mask of chaos.

—Th. W. Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, Tübingen, 1949 (my trans.).

THE first, third, fifth, eighth and ninth works fall into Dr. Adorno's category. I fully agree with Eric Blom, that is to say, about Prokofiev's Sixth being chaotic, but for the opposite reason. He thinks the first movement never forms into anything like a recognizable shape; I suggest its shape is far too recognizable, even though it is not as calcified as the grotesquely regressive sonata-form of the Fifth's first movement. But a neatly

ordered, highly inorganic, wholly foreseeable, polythematic, would-be extended and would-be developmental, ill-modified and outmoded sonata structure it nevertheless remains; in fact within the all too obtrusively delimited sections there is far less invention than within those of the Fifth. Foreseeable does not, of course, mean consequent: if you know the Fifth's inconsequences you can foresee the Sixth's. Let me sail towards the most important among them *via* the programme note and *The Times*' notice. Both were, provably, highly defective; their worth rested in their entertainment value for those who knew and heard better. Which, however, is not to underestimate the gravity of the absurdities of Mr. Thomas Russell's programme note:

The Symphony opens in a pastoral mood, with the first violins establishing the prevailing atmosphere. A more energetic section, with semiquavers in the violins, fails to take us far from the original material, soon to be heard again in cellos and basses. A slow section appears twice, delaying the passionate development of the movement, which ultimately diminishes in speed and strength to end slowly and quietly.

Now, dear listener, you know what's going on in the first movement, in fact you can follow it all, one finger in the programme, another between your teeth. We want a straight reply to two straight questions. First, is there anything in this note which the greatest musical idiot cannot hear for himself? Second, does it contain anything of structural relevance? Mr. Russell does not even go into the cyclic mechanism of the work. You may say, here *he* thought that was obvious. But no: he draws attention to the third movement's glaringly insistent quotation of the first, while not mentioning the less obvious, yet formally more important recurrences of the initial motto before the A₁ end of the middle movement and before the C major tune in the finale. Blom says the Symphony "begins with an ugly Cerberus bark from the trombones". I am not trying to defend the work when I submit that one is not fair to it if one evaluates and describes, subjectively and metaphorically, its opening motto (immediately recognizable as such) without saying that it is a motto: without indicating its structural purpose, its intended unifying function. That Mr. Russell, who was supposed to have studied the score, has to be told by me, who has not even seen it, how functional the first motif is throws the appropriate light upon his superficial note. It is no good saying that programme notes are always like that; as we shall see below they are not and need not be. From Mr. Russell's observations it is not a very far cry to *The Times*, if only because the *Times* critic does not always find programme notes altogether uninspiring (see Robert Simpson on p. 192 in the August, 1948, issue of this journal). Thus, since Mr. Russell does not concern himself with the (often forcedly) conventional formal procedures of the first movement, *The Times* arrives at the verdict that "the symphony begins with a brisk motif in the brass [again no functional indication.—H.K.] which is expanded and propelled on thrummed rhythms to some sort of conclusion which is reached, satisfactorily enough, without the aid of conventional procedures, and the second slow movement follows largely in the same vein". My understanding of this sort of description is limited; what I do understand of the *Times* notice is partly irrelevant and partly wrong. But if the *Times* critic may have heeded the printed word as far as the music itself was concerned, he preferred his own private musings on extra-musical facts on which printed information was available: "It would seem likely that this symphony satisfies the Russian critical canon of 'realism' largely by its succession of simple rhythms much reiterated and the blazoning of some fairly tuneful themes now and again on trumpets or other strident medium. . . ." As I pointed out in *The Listener* of 16th March in reply to an enquiry from Arthur Jacobs, the Russian composer V. A. Belyi, a member of the Organizational Committee of the Composers' Union, said on the second day of the Moscow conference of musicians at the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party in January, 1948: "It is curious to observe the struggle of the two Prokofievs in a work like his Sixth Symphony. Here the melodious, harmonious Prokofiev is often attacked, without provocation, by the other, storming Prokofiev." The "storming" Prokofiev is said to believe in "innovation for innovation's sake", he has an artistic snobbishness, a false fear of being commonplace and ordinary". (See Alexander Werth, *Musical Uproar in Moscow*, 1949, p. 72.) Desmond Shawe-Taylor

was aware of the fact that "this was Prokofiev's last major work before the Central Committee's Decree on Music of 10th February, 1948", and that Zhdanov "felt competent to consign it to oblivion". In fact, from America to Germany (see Joseph Rufer, "Was ist sowjetische Musik?", in *Stimmen* [official organ of the ISCM, Section Germany], III/19) musicians have been discussing the official Soviet reactions to the Symphony. As for Belyi's criticism, I hear "the struggle of the two Prokofievs" the other way round: the originally and naturally progressive composer being often attacked by his regressive conscience, and thus giving way to timidly over-conventional manoeuvres. This conflict is particularly noticeable (even though it remained totally unnoticed) in the basically narrow tonal schemes and the tonal structures of both the fifth and sixth symphonies which atone for their more adventurous deflections of tonality by well-nigh obsessional confirmations of the tonic. Tragi-comic, for example, to follow the Sixth's first movement from the first theme in E flat minor to the second in D major (related to the first) and the oboe theme in B minor, whence back we go to the first subject in the tonic, a pre-developmental reprise without *raison d'être*. The movement ends in the tonic major, and the second starts again in E flat minor before it settles in A♭, its own tonic, returning moreover to E flat major in the second, lyrical theme. The E flat major rondo theme of the finale shows, incidentally, a compromise between crime and atonement which cannot fail to excite the psychoanalytic musicologist's interest: what is, on the one hand, a typically Prokofievian "tonal dislocation" (as Soviet critics used to say), jumps, on the other, back to the subdominant. From the thematic viewpoint, a particularly chaotic proclamation of traditional order is the cyclic end of the last movement which on the one hand fails to strengthen the unity of the whole work while on the other hand it tears the finale itself asunder. The fourth Symphony has at least the decency to fall openly, as it were naturally, and step by step, to pieces. Similarly as the Fifth's first phrase shouts "I am the motto, watch out for me", the Walton's opening contains a suspiciously ostentatious structural proclamation: "Ladies and Gentlemen", says the first subject's semi-quaver figure, "I am highly thematic. Pray, set your minds at rest, unity is secured". "If that is so", the listener may have thought, "I might as well go home". Nor would he have gone far wrong. As an example of the possible divergence of responsible critical comment, I should like to juxtapose *The Daily Telegraph's* (R.C.'s) impression with my own. He thinks this music "is a demonstration of the resources still available in the tonal system". I think it could easily mislead one to consider the tonal system dead. The rhetorical question—What is new about such differences of opinion?—does not satisfy my conscience. Either I do not understand the Sonata, or R.C. invests it with illusory qualities, or both. In neither possibility can an artistic morality acquiesce. I have previously suggested in these pages that the intra-individually, extremely variable conditions for critical sanity require the most careful investigation. Instead of mumbling such muddle-headed phrases as "healthy differences of taste and opinion", we ought to embark patiently on the study of what may turn out to be the objectifiable aspect of subjectivity. I personally never want to hear this Sonata again, nor do I want to see it (another problem here for the conscientious critic). Is Walton, somewhere in his mind, reacting against atonality? The negative, worn-out, almost defiantly conservative style of the work asks for an explanation. As for its form, the sonata movement has none, though it contains cogent stretches, such as an inspired, lyrical *Rückführung*, a structural juncture which nowadays is usually mismanaged. Among the worst spots for me is what for Dyneley Hussey is the first movement's "serene coda" which I consider, to coin a word in despair, quite evitable. As was to be expected, the variation movement is better. Menuhin's lavish vibrato downstairs in the *pizzicato* variation, beside being tasteless in itself, did not look beyond its own nose: the wobble does not work upstairs, whence in this context it does not even make tasteless sense. Altogether the most disappointing and depressing musical experience of the year. Surprisingly impressive, on the other hand, were the Sauguet and the Christou, in both of which our musical times' ever greater insistence on strictly functional openings of wide forms manifests itself far more subtly. They both start with a harmonic cell which, however, is given horizontally in the case of

the Christou, being at the same time the thematic cell of the whole. It would have been easy to give a popular outline of the Sauguet's harmonic structure, provided of course that one understood it, but Harold Rutland preferred to inform the readers of *The Radio Times* that the effect of the first movement's five-eight "is tumultuous, with a throbbing rhythm persisting throughout", and that the Andantino "attains a tremendous climax before subsiding into a quiet close . . .". Again we have to ask: what listener wants to read what he will hear anyway? What point is there in giving a commentary whose relation to the music parallels a Hollywood score's relation to its film? When shall we see the end of all these Musical Stultification Classes? The Sauguet's opening vertical third E-G elicits the spontaneous question: C major or E minor? The first defined key is C major, whence we proceed to a dynamically emphasized, beautifully painful C minor which replaces the expected continuation of the tonic major. The movement develops into the opening third's alternative implication, E minor, and ends in E with undefined mode. Similarly to, though far more consistently than the second movement of Prokofiev's Sixth, the Sauguet's second movement starts again in E, with the theme modulating to C sharp minor; but in this case the initial key proves to be the movement's tonic, and it is in its dominant minor that the third movement turns out to be embedded. Following the Symphony's premises the finale starts in E minor, its *ostinato* figure availing itself later of the same notes, horizontally now, and the same tonal ambiguity as the opening of the work. And as precise complement to the unexpected and anxious C minor after and instead of the first movement's expected C major, we now get, for the first time in the Symphony, an unexpected, liberating E *major* instead of the expected E minor. But the mood and harmonic structure of the work have to return us to E minor and indeed to the horizontal *ostinato* version of the opening third. This is interpreted either way in reverse order, first as E minor, then as C major; and it is with these notes, too, that the Symphony ends, I need not say in which key. Here then is, not a great work, but an original. Having, as it happened, heard my first Greek symphonic poem, *i.e.* Kalomiris' *La Mort de la Vaillante*, played by the New London Orchestra under Sherman at Covent Garden on a Sunday afternoon late in '48, and having found it dreadful, I approached Covent Garden, Sherman, the NLO and another Greek symphonic poem on another Sunday afternoon with considerable, if unwarranted hesitation. The 24-year-old Christou's strikingly assured composition—his first to be played in this country—proved to be clear-cut and of close form in spite of its rhapsodic style, its only structural weakness being an over-reliance on our age's blessing and curse (chiefly curse), the motoric *ostinato*. In his exceptionally brilliant programme note (whose wrong, *i.e.* German interpunctuations someone might have revised), H. F. Redlich did not unfortunately point to the harmonic significance of what he called "the root motif A", *i.e.* B-A \sharp -C. For as in the Sauguet, there are here to begin with two principal alternative implications, though one (E minor) is much more persuasive than the other (B). And once again expectation and surprise are organically combined in the expected tonality's opposite mode (E major); once more, too, the logically progressive tonal drive aims at the other of the two initial harmonic implications: the work ends in (on) the dominant (B). The mode of this tonality, however, remains undefined, for the mode of the initial implication of B had not been defined either; whereas in the Sauguet, where the final tonality's mode is defined, its implication in the opening third had been defined too. My friend F.A. of *The Sunday Times*, who disposed so well of the Mengelberg that nothing remains for me to curse, was far less to the point when it came to the *Spring* Symphony: "Britten has nothing more to learn from Mahler or Berg in the matter of orchestration; as usual, the slenderest musical material is manipulated with mastery, and what appears doubtful on paper is realized in actual sound with astonishing success." When I hear a critic remarking about a composer's brilliant orchestration, I know that something has gone wrong either with the composer or with the critic. For it means either that the orchestration is not functional, or that the critic has not realized its inevitability. What to F.A. appears doubtful on paper is doubtless an interesting question, to be reserved, however, for his autobiography; for with the *Spring* Symphony it has nothing to do. In point of fact the orchestration is neither good

nor bad, but non-existent. The "material" was conceived in terms of actual sound—a fact which is obvious to the ear and demonstrable on paper. (Cf. here my "Britten and Mozart" [including my quotation from Desmond Shawe-Taylor] in *Music and Letters*, January, 1948, p. 23.) I have indicated in the last issue why the Symphony is a symphony; I shall review the score in the next. The BBC has so far broadcast a single performance, at 6 p.m., of what is the first string Trio since Beethoven to be handled with supreme mastery, completed more than three years ago.* The Bayrische Rundfunk, on the other hand, recently broadcast the work twice on the same night, which realistic treatment, incidentally, Schönberg received even in conservative Vienna, where the Kolisch Quartet played the 4th Quartet twice in a recital in the Ehrbarsaal before the last war. What is the Third Programme there for, if not to acquaint its adult listeners with a work like this Trio? But here we are up against the most dangerous brand of arrogance in our culture: the arrogance of the small herd, of the majority of a minority. In new art and new science, however, it is usually the minority of the minority which counts, until the majority of the minority joins in for the wrong reasons. To William Hyman's forthcoming analysis [regretfully held over (Ed.)] and to my own observations in the last issue I wish, for the moment, to add a remark about a vertical aspect of the work, i.e. the dis-tensional consonant harmonies at the transitional junctures between the sections: it is these "tonal" spots, not their atonal context, which are difficult to understand and liable to be misunderstood, for they must be heard, whereby I mean felt, atonally. Needless to say, true to the BBC principle of telling us everything we know and shall hear and no more, the announcer spared himself any analytical observations, though he did warn the sleepy that the work was in one continuous movement. Oldham's *Divertimento*, while, in his words, "following in form the classical example set by Mozart", is stylistically a symposium whose main contributors range from Schubert to Prokofiev; the inevitable hypnotic influence of Britten has decreased since the *Variations on the Coventry Carol* (1948) and *Summer's Lease* (7 Shakespeare sonnets for tenor and strings, 1949). Isolated flashes apart, however, for instance in the third, siciliana-like variation of the Andante, there is little musical value in these five movements; they remain essentially a student's effort. Not so the B flat violin Sonata, which has similar formal and stylistic allegiances, but is so far his best work for the concert hall (I do not know the ballets). It is in fact too good: a largely flawless form that lives on acting the primitivity it hides; neoclassicism, I believe, is the euphemism. I would remind Mr. Oldham that his ideal, Mozart, wrote far less finished stuff at the corresponding stage of development, and that Schönberg said 40 years ago in his *Probleme des Kunstunterrichts* that "the belief in technique's claiming the monopoly of all means of grace should be suppressed, the striving after truthfulness should be encouraged". We quite agree with Mr. Rosenheim that any old thing which is slow, short, Bach, and in E minor (in this case an organ prelude) can be used for breaking up what for him and Ernest Newman seems to be the monotony of the 3rd *Brandenburg*; the shreds he can keep to himself.

H. K.

* After these lines had been set there followed a second broadcast (at 6.20 p.m.) 10½ weeks after the first.

REVIEWERS

J. B.	— JOHN BOULTON
H. K.	— HANS KELLER
D. M.	— DONALD MITCHELL
G. N. S.	— EDITOR
E. H. W. M.	— E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN

Concerts and Opera

MARIA STADER (SOPRANO)

FIRST RECITAL IN ENGLAND: 4TH JANUARY

NIGHT after night the scene of unmentionable goings-on among undesirable foreigners and natives alike, Wigmore Hall allowed us this time to take a deep if pitchless breath of culture from Switzerland. Partly determined by nervousness, Miss Stader's vagrant, mostly sharp intonation ran, it is true, downright amuck in places like the diminished fifth at the end of the first phrase in the *St. John Passion's* "Zerfliesse, mein Herze"; nor would she seize an opportunity to rectify a lapse: in Schubert's *Seligkeit* she was always sharp on the same note in the same phrase. For once, nevertheless, one heard the result of a musical musician's musical education. The *Entführung's* great G minor aria—to whose kinship with the *Zauberflöte's* aria in the same key Dent has drawn attention without, alas, pointing to either's sorrowfully expressive rests—Miss Stader really sang with "beklemmter Brust", replacing, by the way, the words "weil ich dir entrissen bin" by "Traurigkeit, Entrissenheit"—an unquestionable improvement from the point of view of musical declamation. But her substituting a' for the all-important Neapolitan II's inflection of the solo bar "wieder in mein ganzes Herz" was unpardonable. Not so, by any means, her departure from another score, i.e. her f''-g''-c''-f'' cadence at the end of the Alleluia from K.165, at which some idiot shook his pseudo-musicological head; his reaction would not be worth mentioning were it not such a perfect and simple little symptom of the widespread disease that hides behind the hygienic name "Werktreue": fidelity to the letter without any knowledge of its practical reason and musical significance.

Silent about Köchel numbers and indeed scornful of any designation whatsoever, the programme enclosed in one bracket the "piano rondino with text" (Einstein) *An Chloé* (K.524), the chanson *Les Oiseaux* (K.307), the canzonetta *Ridente la calma* . . . (K.152; not mentioned by Einstein), the "lyric scena" (Einstein) *Das Veilchen* (K.476), the aria *Per pietà bel idol mio* . . . (K.78; not mentioned by Einstein), and the above-mentioned final movement of the *Exsultate, jubilate* motet.

REGER'S MOZART-VARIATIONS: NWDR RECORDING

THIRD PROGRAMME: 6TH JANUARY

THE BBC has her own unoriginal approach to facts as well as factual criticism: the deaf mask. Even if you shout an open letter into her ears she does not listen. Nor can you ever tell what next she will not hear. Take, for instance, a fugue. That she does not know, not even in the Third province of her unconscious, that Reger's Mozart-Variations end with a mere fugue, and that they are therefore called, with typical German pedantry, *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Mozart*, will not surprise anyone. But that she did not hear the fugue when (as one assumes with unfair optimism) it was played to her before the title of the programme and the announcer's words were composed, was an astounding achievement. Yet, unaware though she likes to remain of a composer's own title and of the music it describes, it is only fair to add that she can be relied on to draw attention to the fact—in case the Third Programme listener should feel inclined to forget—that Beethoven's E flat Concerto is called *The Emperor*, or that there "never was anything more sparkling and colourful" than *The Firebird*, whose story she will in fact always be glad to supply. In a word, her deaf mask expresses the conviction that as far as music is concerned, one should put one's trust in one's visual sense.

The NWDR recording turned out to be better than usual, and Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt's direction of the same corporation's orchestra was on the whole most musical; particularly well did he realize the *vivace* in E minor with its age-honoured dactylic approach to the theme. But fruitful as his *marcato* style proved in this fourth variation, it severely hampered his interpretation of the fugue, the accents of whose subject he took

to imply that while emphases on the fourth beats of the first two bars and on each strong beat of the succeeding bars were to be assumed as a matter of course, the first two bars' first beats had to be yet more vehemently stressed. In reality Reger's accents indicate which of the other metrical accents should, in contrast, be silenced and which weakened for the subject to develop its structure and its *grazioso* character, and to envelop as it were its dynamics towards the (*sempre*) *ppp*.

Composed at the end of the Meiningen period (1911-12) these eight variations, together with the fugue which grows so naturally out of the Mozart theme from K.331, create the utmost variety from a given unity. With its lucid and strictly functional orchestration the *opus* (132) seems in fact Reger's best. "It was only very rarely possible for [Reger]", says Furtwängler in his *Gespräche über Musik* (1948, pp. 25f.), "to get as much into a musical unity as is necessary for what the music of a previous age called a 'theme'. Hence . . . his inclination to treat and vary themes of other, previous masters". Reger himself made a 2-piano arrangement (Op. 132a) of the score. Published by Simrock in 1915, this ought to be made available over here, unknown though it is to *Grove*, where it is not even included in the list of Reger's works.

H. K.

THE HUNGARIAN QUARTET

WIGMORE HALL, 15TH JANUARY

Walton's A minor, Bartók No. 4 and Beethoven Op. 127

THIS was great quartet-playing: fundamentally so, because of the strength of the inner voices, Moskowsky and Koromzay. Most string quartets are all top and bottom and no middle, so are many orchestras, but not these Hungarians. The result was that Walton and Beethoven were given a fair deal, Bartók an altogether exceptional one. The latter was, in fact, fantastic in the true sense of a much-abused word—capricious, extravagantly fanciful, eccentric, and yet what conviction these Hungarians brought to their Bartók; never will he be better played nor his inmost thought depicted in truer colour. By comparison nearly all contemporary music is rubbish. The Beethoven was played with a virile awareness which emphasized line rather than texture, the Walton also; with the result that one wondered whether this attractive A minor piece had not strayed into too exalted company. Certainly it could only have been played first.

COVENT GARDEN

Butterfly

17th January

THIS *Butterfly* was remarkable for the great improvement of Neate (Pinkerton), truly a B.F. only in name, the beautiful sets designed by Sophie Fedorovitch and Robert Helpmann's imaginative production. Elisabeth Schwarzkopf seemed miscast as *Butterfly*, though she sang well enough, Tom Williams made an excellent Sharpless and Monica Sinclair an adequate Suzuki. The orchestra made some beautiful sounds for Mr. Braithwaite, together with others that were less acceptable, and although the overall result bore some obvious signs of insufficient rehearsal, there were other respects in which it formed a credit to the house.

G. N. S.

NEATE IN "CARMEN"

COVENT GARDEN, 23RD JANUARY

YOUR reviewer has not seen this opera often; he has ideas about it and may quite possibly be talking wide of the mark. He knows, as most people know (though Karl Rankl may be an exception), that it is not *deutsche Kunst*. Whatever stress be laid on the motifs of fate and sentiment, the *allegros* and concerted pieces must be played with more than a hint of bite and menace always, as if knives might flash out as well as knaves fall out. In other words the conductor should, if procurable, be a Frenchman, even if the libretto be anglicized (by Hermann Klein), and the language, e.g. of the quintet, be approximated as closely to Gilbertian patter as is acoustically bearable. No conductor, of any nation,

should scrap the last *Entr'acte*, on the ground that the audience will soon hear that tune danced to, nor should he fail in treating the last two bars of the second *Entr'acte* with the utmost *finesse* and not as conventional *ppps*. A lashing tempest must never be far away from those lazy hot skies of orchestral azure. In an *ideal* performance, such as Mr. Peter Brook (or whoever is in charge) simply *must* secure for us, Guiraud's recitatives will be mercilessly scrapped. Then, and then alone, we shall hear and see the miracle that Bizet really is.

But (w.a.f., as the secondhand booksellers say) this performance was a wonderful thing. Constance Shacklock, though her part in the "cards" trio and the final duet was as good as good can be, is not the Carmen of one's dreams. No magician can turn a blonde into a brunette or jerked limbs into a gust of flame. She seemed less the Spanish Gipsy than a collateral of Meg Merrilies and Azucena. Patricia Howard was a very touching Micaela indeed, and Rankl appeared to find himself most when supporting her. Frasquita and Mercedes (Audrey Bowman and Rosina Raisbeck) were so so, and Escamillo (Geraint Evans) did not sound to me absolutely dead on his note here and there: BUT never do I hope to see the part of Don José realized with such manhood, pathos and exactitude as by Kenneth Neate. This was ambitious military youth struck down remorselessly by a fatal passion to the very life. Perfect control of voice, never forced, and in the pleading passages poignantly beautiful. I take off my hat to him for I do not believe that there is an actor in London, of any standing whatever, who would not learn by watching his movements, of the feet especially, in the last act. Perhaps I should say that I was totally unprepared for this, having previously seen Don José played as rather a heavy dragoon. I put this performance in the same category as Lydia Lopokova's as Ibsen's Nora, in that the development of the character, *there* by influx of knowledge, *here* under the sirocco of passion, was precisely registered with no exaggeration anywhere. That last duet, though Carmen looked less like herself than a Minoan figurine, is something I shall never forget. I came away thinking that if Mr. Neate could be cast for Don Giovanni, without a beard, we should hear the audacity of the "champagne" *aria* and the terror of arrogance as the statue leads youth to doom expressed as at no Mozart performance in this generation.

E. H. W. M.

MAHLER MIS-PERFORMED:

VAN BEINUM'S "DAS LIED VON DER ERDE"

Royal Albert Hall, 26th January

In *The Observer* of the 29th January, Mr. Sebastian Haffner wrote with unusual accuracy of the "LPO's *Das Lied von der Erde*". It certainly was not Mahler's.

Das Trinklied von Jammer der Erde: Not one of Mahler's accented notes (and they are numerous) was *felt* either by the soloist or orchestra. The trills in both woodwind and strings were inaudible—trills which Mahler uses in his own inimitable manner to scour out the inside of every note and give each its full meaning. A fine example of this withering procedure occurs at [7]¹, *sempre l'istesso tempo*, between "Wenn der Kummer naht" and "liegen wüsst die Gärten der Seele". The moment passed unnoticed by Mr. van Beinum, as did the subtle across-the-bar phrasing of the succeeding section and the tense serenity of the *Tranquillo* which leads to the first "Dunkel ist das Leben ist der Tod": van Beinum's preparation for this phrase was a sharp *sforzando* on the first beat of the first bar although it is marked *pianissimo* in the score. At [31] it became increasingly apparent that Mr. Kenneth Neate's affinity with the German language was not very high. "Das Firmament blaut ewig . . .": Mahler and Mr. Neate had not much in common at this point. The passage is inscribed *ma appassionato*. Mr. van Beinum quite arbitrarily omitted the crotchet rest which intervenes before the final *ff* chord of the song, and thus we were deprived of one of Mahler's finest dramatic strokes.

In my review* of van Beinum's previous performance of *Das Lied* I complained of his

¹ All numerical references are to the vocal score prepared by Erwin Stein (Boosey and Hawkes).

* *Music Survey*, II/1/49.

"tendency to drag the *tempi* of the quick movements". His vagaries on that occasion were nothing compared to the revengefully funereal pace which he imposed on *Der Einsame im Herbst*. It made things unreasonably difficult for the contralto, Eugenia Zareska. Mahler's protracted, step-wise vocal line which proceeds in ever expanding arcs, needs a perfectly sustained breath to maintain its phrasing and structure. Van Beinum's dilatory pace effectively defeated the best of his soloist's intentions. In the middle of the movement the *tempo* suddenly changed direction and we had everywhere an excessive *rubato* except in the right places: as I expected the gentle reiteration of "verwelkten, gold'nen Blätter" was completely and impressively ignored. It was not altogether surprising that Madame Zareska followed up with a "Mein Herz ist müde" sung *con molto espressione* instead of *senza* as directed by Mahler. Her exasperation must have been great. Fortunately nothing can destroy the originality of Mahler's counterpoint (particularly evident at [16] "Ich weine viel . . .") or his extraordinarily prophetic harmonic adventures.

Von der Jugend: I was able to notice Mahler's superb use of the *pianissimo* cymbal at [10] *et seq.* and Mr. Neate's faulty phrasing of "Spiegelbilde" (the last bars of the *lento* section [11]).

Von der Schönheit: *Comodo* conspicuously lacking in van Beinum's *tempo*, and uneasy moments before Madame Zareska found herself in step with the orchestra. One of the most sonorous movements in the score, but very little of its sonority realized. The last twenty-one bars are Everybody's Handbook of Orchestration: nothing to be copied but everything to be learned.

Der Trunkene im Frühling: No orchestral bite, no vocal bitterness. There was very little *tranquillo* in Mr. Neate's "Ein Vogel singt im Baum" which was hurried, and as for "Der Lenz", it came unnoticed by conductor, orchestra, soloist and audience. The *lento* "Aus tiefstem Schauen" (one of Mahler's few clumsy transitions) was more noticeable than usual. Mr. Neate's rushed quavers at [12] "Und wenn ich nicht . . ." showed little comprehension of music or text, and van Beinum made an unfortunate *ritardando* at "Lasst mich betrunken sein. . . ."

Der Abschied was incoherent. In neither of the two recitatives with flute *cadenza* was Madame Zareska in time with the flautist, who otherwise played very beautifully. In the big middle-section climax (beginning *con moto* [23]) the soloist was chaotically at odds with the orchestra—I avoid "out of time" because, as a colleague remarked, there was no time to be in. "O Schönheit!" indeed: I fervently echoed Mahler's "Wo bleibst du?" The orchestra read through its elaborate commentary on the preceding disaster with no sense of climax whatsoever: and to add insult to injury van Beinum ignored Mahler's direction to beat one in a bar for the final section and so phrasing and rhythm were hopelessly lost.

A few more "revivals" of this order and we shall have Mahler's corpse on our hands.
D. M.

PHILHARMONIA CONCERT SOCIETY

GALLIERA

Albert Hall, 2nd February

A FINE sensitive rendering of the Brahms Haydn Variations and Beethoven's seventh Symphony. The balance and contrast of the former were perhaps slightly underlined by length of pauses affecting continuity and making the set rather a demonstration in musical efficiency than a creation. The high spots of the Symphony were the second part of the trio and the finale, which was faultless, the very clear playing of the main theme making the link with the second theme in the introduction, as is not always evident in performances (the last part of the *coda*'s relation to the two octave scales of the introduction usually is). Perhaps the start of the whole was not quite *sostenuto* enough, but it was clear that restraint was used earlier, and even in the *Allegretto*, to ensure a really memorable close. An alteration in the programme replaced Medtner's third piano Concerto, played by the composer, by the Brahms violin Concerto played by Gioconda de Vito. This was a

poetic and impassioned rendering, failing at no point whatever, by a very fine artist indeed, where neither virility nor tenderness was sacrificed. The work could not have been better given by soloist or orchestra.

E. H. W. M.

BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ALBERT HALL, 15TH FEBRUARY

Mozart: Overture *Die Entführung*, Flute Concerto (K.314), Symphony No. 39 in E flat

Strauss: *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Finale *Feuersnot*

THERE were occasions, principally in the Symphony and most of all in its finale, when this orchestra earned the description of being London's worst whose members are paid to make a noise in public. The intonation of the horns was utterly unreliable, and a number of the back desk violins were patently either unable to cope with some of their more intricate music or just not prepared to make the effort. Perhaps Sir Thomas Beecham does not see so far nor hear so acutely as formerly, for years ago he would not have tolerated such shodderly.

For sheer artistry Geoffrey Gilbert's brilliant account of the flute Concerto dwarfed all else and as the orchestral share in this work was reasonably tidy this proved to be the outstanding event of the evening. In the Overture Sir Thomas gave full rein to the kitchen department, presumably in the attempt to inflate Mozart's little piece into a full-blown (and banged) Albert Hall monster: a good time was had by most of the participants, including Sir Thomas, but it is difficult to believe that he had any illusion that he was serving the composer's best interests.

The opening of *Zarathustra* was astonishingly tame. Here where all the various pieces of ordnance, including the organ, had a diabolical opportunity of proving their ability to pulverize the Albert Hall into submission, Sir Thomas was apparently satisfied to let the set piece go off at half cock. But in other respects he made Herculean efforts to drive the orchestra out of its usual rut, including a good deal of audible vocal encouragement. This was slave-driving at high pressure; that the resultant playing was not of the finest quality was not Sir Thomas' fault. Even if there is a dearth of good orchestral musicians, the BBC Symphony Orchestra still needs a drastic and thorough overhaul.

KUBELIK'S MOZART

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

Albert Hall, 20th February

THE programme consisted of the last three symphonies, with the *Exsultate, jubilate* (K.165) (Schwarzkopf) interpolated immediately after the interval and before the *Jupiter*.

Kubelik earned our gratitude in the E flat Symphony by counteracting the wrongs committed in the same work in the same hall five days earlier. The playing had that lithe precision and spontaneous-seeming brilliance so essential to authentic Mozart performance; yet not once during the evening did Kubelik lapse into that superficiality which commonly betrays the trifler with Mozart. What was, before the war, a matter for conjecture, can now be stated outright: here, in the making, is a very great conductor indeed.

G. N. S.

WIGMORE HALL

25TH FEBRUARY

FRANCES COMSTOCK, an American mezzo soprano, is happier in the lower registers. Even if her shrillness in the higher were due to laryngitis acquired in Europe, with which she modestly acquainted her audience, it could hardly have prevented a person sitting in the front row from hearing the words of (e.g.) Duparc's *L'Invitation au voyage*, where hardly anything came through but "Luxe, calme, et volupté". Where words are written by first-rate poets it is particularly trying not to hear them. On the other hand the reiteration of "Oh, what a beautiful city" in one of the spirituals (what a misnomer that term is!) near the end of the programme must have been heard in every corner of the hall.

ALBERT HALL

28TH FEBRUARY

THE troll that presides over the arrangement of concert programmes must have smiled wryly on this occasion when, under Richard Austin, the Philharmonia Orchestra followed Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony by three pieces as sophisticated as Ravel's *Schéhérazade* and *La Valse*, and Rudolf Mengelberg's *Capriccio* for piano and orchestra (soloist Stefan Askenase). The New Era Concert Society, which "has been formed to bring music of the highest order within the reach of everyone", might have thought twice before including the last with its strident humourless rhetoric, meaningless drum-taps and Raffish sentimentality advertising only a pianist's percussive qualities. Suzanne Danco gave a good account of the spurious Debussyism and (in "La Flûte enchantée") Korsakovism of Ravel's early oriental vagary. Her voice, never forced, kept a *parlante* level, her enunciation was perfect (you did not miss one of Tristan Klingsor's sloppy words) and her stance is a model for female concert singers. The *Pastoral* (first movement particularly) is in some respects the most exacting of the nine. The deep pulse and recurrent undertones of nature must *always* be felt. The *Allegro non troppo* should not suggest a village maiden holding up her skirt as she trips delicately over stepping-stones, or a Birket Foster woodcut, and conductors should bear in mind that, for all its contrast in style, it is constructed on exactly similar lines (even to the *cadenza* at the start of the reprise) to the *Allegro con brio* of the C minor. In wishing, so it seemed, to make a magnificent close, Mr. Austin sacrificed the peaceful intensity of the earlier movements.

E. H. W. M.

YORKSHIRE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ALBERT HALL, 6TH MARCH

Carnaval Romain, Butterworth's *Shropshire Lad* Rhapsody, Vaughan Williams' sixth Symphony, the *Emperor* Concerto (Denis Matthews) and the *Rienzi* Overture form an exacting programme for the players and, in that order, they made indigestible listening. Shrewder planning would have put Berlioz, Beethoven and Wagner before the interval, with Butterworth and Vaughan Williams to follow: all the more because Maurice Miles was clearly at his most perceptive in the English music. But then, of course, most of the audience would have gone home at half-time.

Mr. Miles' sympathetic treatment of the Vaughan Williams, and, in particular, his sure integration of the protracted and enigmatic finale, showed that he can persuade the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra to attain and hold a high standard of excellence; there were also isolated flashes of insight in the *Shropshire Lad*, but the three "established classics" were dreadful. *Carnaval Romain*, apparently, has fascinated a number of conductors since that famous performance of October, 1932, but none that I have heard has yet out-Beechamed Beecham. The YSO negotiated the hurdles with too obvious care and attention, revealing by the absence of leisure in their timing that, as a body, they are not yet sufficiently expert to bring Berlioz to Town where, in this music, Beecham, van Beinum and Victor de Sabata may be said to have established a tradition.

It was just this element of tradition that these players lacked. The Beethoven was tentative, Mr. Matthews made more than a few mistakes and those who were hearing the music for the first time can have received no idea of the epic grandeur and magisterial sweep of the composer's imagination. *Rienzi* was just as I feared: treated as fairground music with some of the coarsest brass playing conceivable from members of a professional symphony orchestra.

In sum, the violas were outstanding, other strings wiry and anaemic in tone, horns unreliable, brass coarse and woodwind individually competent without achieving full precision in concerted passages. Considerable promise was shown in the English music, but much remains to be done. Before the YSO next visit the Capital I hope they will have increased their string contingent to something like 18 : 16 : 12 : 10 : 8 and that there will be a first-class hall ready to receive them.

G. N. S.

GINA BACHAUER

WIGMORE HALL, 18TH MARCH

MISS BACHAUER'S recital should have been a notable event. Max Reger's *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Bach*, Op. 81, is his greatest work for the piano, one of the last monuments of its kind, and one of the few that do justice to a superlative theme. It is extremely rarely played. That Reger conceived this complex work as a whole is obvious from the fact that he did not number his variations (as he did in the loosely strung together *Telemann* set, Op. 134), and that in many cases the transitions are effected by sustained pedals: indeed where he wanted an audible break he specified it in the score. At the end of the eighth variation for instance *sehr kurze Pause* is marked. None of these considerations evidently carried any weight with Miss Bachauer, who quite arbitrarily and without any indication on the programme omitted five of the fourteen variations, including two of the four slow movements which are as much the work's crowning glory as the final fugue. As a result the delicate balance of Reger's structure was disrupted and his subtle tonal edifice completely destroyed. Such irresponsibility should not go unrecorded. Miss Bachauer must stand convicted of scandalous contempt for her composer.

D. M.

DIE WINTERREISE

WIGMORE HALL, 19TH MARCH

THIS performance by Hans Hotter and Gerald Moore reached so high a standard in all essential matters that the one or two minor instances of questionable *tempo* may be allowed to pass. In this small hall Hotter had no need to force his voice, nor did he; and it was reassuring to hear once again that fine steady stream of tone which recently seemed temporarily to have forsaken him. Best of all was the fully imaginative capture of the smouldering passion of *Auf dem Flusse* and *Fruhlingstraum*.

G. N. S.

[Reviews of Books and Music are unavoidably held over (Ed.).]

Gramophone Records

Brahms: *Violin Concerto in D*. Op. 77.*

Menuhin and the Lucerne Festival Orchestra, c. Furtwängler.

His Master's Voice DB 21000-03; DBS 21004. 27s.

There are two fundamentally divergent lines of approach to this music: the vigorous, aggressive and rhetorical attitude, resulting in a rare tussle between soloist and orchestra, as exemplified in the performances of Bronislaw Huberman with cufflinks flashing, bow slashing sabrelike and intonation periodically sacrificed to dramatic expediency; or, by contrast, the resigned, contemplative unfolding of Brahms' melodic line favoured, at least in later years, by Fritz Kreisler. The performance under review inclines towards the latter conception, but avoids any suggestion of spinelessness or emasculation. It is, in fact, eminently sane and well-balanced, with Menuhin playing far above his recent normal standard and Furtwängler observing the composer's dynamics with meticulous care. (For a particularly illuminating example, see the orchestral re-entry immediately after the first movement's *cadenza*.) The recording is variable: mostly good near the record perimeter, deteriorating to bad at minimum radius.

* Strongly recommended.

Schönberg: *Verklärte Nacht*. Op. 4.*

St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, c. Golschmann.

His Master's Voice DB 9280-83. 24s.

It is arguable that the musical stuff of *Verklärte Nacht* is too pungent, vigorous, even too explosive to be contained in stable form within the confines of a string sextet. Golschmann's magnificent performance lends support to such a contention. Not only has he seen the work whole from first bar to last, he has managed to project his imaginative feat through the recording with altogether unusual success. This is an exceptional issue which should not be missed, despite the fact that the American recording has no great range of frequency. Of the make-weight on the eighth side it seems best to say nothing.

Bartók: *Children's Pieces*.*

Gerald Moore.

His Master's Voice B 9882-83. 6s. 6d.

This short selection of little pieces for children includes most of the best known. They are all most attractive, beautifully played and very well recorded.

Schubert: *String Quartet in G*. Op. 161.*

Hungarian Quartet.

His Master's Voice DB 9331-35. 30s.

A fair recording of a performance that will set the standard by which others are judged.

Mozart: *Oboe Concerto in C* (K.314).

Evelyn Rothwell and the Hallé Orchestra, c. Barbirolli.

His Master's Voice C. 3954-55. 8s.

Symphony No. 40 in G minor (K.550).*

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Furtwängler.

His Master's Voice DB 6997-99. 18s.

Symphony No. 41 in C (K.551).*Overture, The Impresario* (K.486).

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Böhm.

His Master's Voice C 3884-87. 16s.

These new versions of the G minor and *Jupiter* symphonies replace a number of excellent pre-war recordings, primarily by virtue of the recent improvements in engineering technique. The former, even so, would be outstanding in any company, while the latter is sound and workmanlike, if a little stodgy. This oboe Concerto is a first recording of great interest despite some minor imperfections of performance and peculiarities of recorded balance.

Berlioz: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Romeo's Reverie* and *Feast of the Capulets*, *Love Scene*,* and *Queen Mab Scherzo*.*Les Troyens*, *Royal Hunt* and *Storm*.

L'Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris, c. Münch.

Decca AX 293-95; X 281 and 301. 30s.

The *Reverie*, *Feast* and *Love Scene* are automatically coupled on AX 293/5; *Queen Mab* and the *Royal Hunt* are separate single discs. Good Berlioz conductors have never been plentiful: now to the names of Beecham, van Beinum, Harty and Monteux must be added that of Charles Münch. There are minor imperfections in the playing, woodwind chording not absolutely precise, doubtful intonation and so on, but the faults are not allowed to assume serious proportions and the style is admirable. By comparison the usual English approach to Berlioz is as obtuse as the French attitude to Elgar. Whoever denies the beauty of this *Love Scene* brands himself, not Berlioz. The recording is good.

* Strongly recommended.

- Brahms: Tragic Overture. Op. 81.*
Hungarian Dance No. 5.
 Philharmonia Orchestra, c. Kletzki.
 Columbia LX 1251-52. 12s.
- Britten: Variations on a theme of Frank Bridge. Op. 10.*
 Boyd Neel String Orchestra, c. Neel.
 Decca AK 2307-09. 15s.
- Elgar: Overture, Cockaigne. Op. 40.**
 London Philharmonic Orchestra, c. van Beinum.
 Decca AX 296-97. 12s.
- Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6 in B minor. Op. 74.*
 Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Karajan.
 Columbia LX 1234-39. 36s.

These may all be regarded as post-war replacement editions. Elgar's *Cockaigne* is played with real bravado and given recording to match: a fine achievement that sounds most impressive on a reproducer capable of wide-range, high-powered quality performance. Britten's famous *Variations* (dare I describe them as his most musical work?) are here re-recorded by the same body that made the old set about 13 years ago, the improvement is entirely technical but none the less definite. It seems to me that the earlier His Master's Voice issues of the Brahms (Boult) and the Tchaikovsky (Furtwängler) both recaptured a type of sound that was more essentially musical than the overwhelming, as it were chromium-plated racket created by the climaxes in these new versions; one heard far less detail, of course, but the loud passages, as now recorded, sound like canned music. This should not be. There have been several successful records of music at high intensity level, and what has been done on occasion must now be demanded as normal.

KEYBOARD MUSIC

- Bach-Busoni: Chaconne in D minor.**
 Michelangeli.
 His Master's Voice DB 21005-06. 12s.
- Beethoven: Sonata in A flat major. Op. 26.**
Für Elise.
 Gieseking.
 Columbia LX 1230-32. 18s.
- Couperin: Tic Toc Choc, and Les Barricades mystérieuses.*
 Monique Haas.
 Decca F 9331. 2s. 9d.
- Mozart: Sonata in A major (K.331).*
 Backhaus.
 His Master's Voice DB 6810-11. 12s.
- Scarlatti: Toccata in D minor, and Sonata in E major.**
 Liselotte Selbiger (harpsichord).
 Columbia DD 512. 3s. 3d.
- Schumann: Fantasia in C major. Op. 17.*
 Fischer.
 His Master's Voice DB 6959-61. 18s.

Everyone with an interest in keyboard music should make a point of hearing Michelangeli's superb performance of Busoni's transcription of the Bach *Chaconne*, and also Liselotte Selbiger's fine Scarlatti. These two recordings are also remarkable for their technical quality and general balance which are far in advance of the average. On a lower

* Strongly recommended.

plane, all the remaining issues listed in this group can be recommended, with the possible exception of the Mozart Sonata which is given cavalier treatment little suited to its style and character.

VOICE

Beethoven: Fidelio, "Hat man nicht auch Gold beineben".

Weber: Freischütz, "Hier im ird'schen Jammerthal".

Ludwig Weber and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Felix Prohaska.
Columbia LB 87. 4s.

Bizet: Carmen, Seguidilla, and Card Song.

Gianna Pederzini and EIAR Orchestra, c. Tansini.
Parlophone R 30001. 6s.

*Mozart: Entführung, "Welcher Kummer", and "Traurigkeit ward mir zum Lose".**

Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Krips.
Columbia LX 1249. 6s.

Don Giovanni, "Dalla sua pace", and "Il mio tesoro".

Walther Ludwig and the Vienna State Opera Orchestra, c. Felix Prohaska.
Columbia LX 1260. 6s.

*Puccini: Bohème, "Sì, mi chiamano Mimi", and Mimi's Farewell.**

Hilde Güden and the London Symphony Orchestra, c. Krips.
Decca X 302. 6s.

Schubert: Der Erlkönig, and Prometheus.

Bernhard Sönnnerstedt and Gerald Moore.
His Master's Voice C 3925. 4s.

*Verdi: Don Carlos, "Ella giammai m'amo", and "Dormiro sol".**

Boris Christoff and the Philharmonia Orchestra.
His Master's Voice DB 21007. 6s.

*I Vespri Siciliani, "O tu, Palermo".**

Boito: Mefistofele, "Son lo spirito".

Cesare Siepi and the Italian Radio Symphony Orchestra, c. Basile.
Parlophone R 30007. 6s.

Wagner: Meistersinger, "Da zu dir der Heiland kam", and "Silentium. Wach' auf".

Vienna State Opera Chorus and Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Karajan.
Columbia LX 1258. 6s.

The records of Weber and Christoff are both subject to objectionable distortion due, it seems, to over-recording of the voice at moments of climax: even so, any excerpt from *Fidelio*, however brief, must be welcome and Christoff's wonderful singing must not be missed. The two Parlophone issues are selected from a batch of very variable quality both artistically and from an engineering viewpoint. These are among the best: Pederzini has voice and, apparently, style and intelligence, while Siepi is obviously an artist of the first rank. Ludwig sings Ottavio's two set-pieces as if they were concert arias which, you may say, is what they are. All the rest attain a high standard, the Puccini proving conclusively that the human voice can be recorded without audible distortion.

G. N. S.

Schumann: Dichterliebe—Song Cycle. Op. 48.

Suzanne Danco, acc. Agosti.

Decca AK 2310-12. 15s.

Danco's performance of the *Dichterliebe* is disappointing: her accompanist's is insensitive throughout. Many of the songs are hurried arbitrarily—"Ich grolle nicht" for instance—and she fails lamentably to pass the exacting test of the opening phrase of

* Strongly recommended.

"Im wunderschönen Monat Mai", where she makes little of Heine's marvellous poetry or Schumann's marvellous music. If you do not know everything implied in and by "Im wunderschönen Monat Mai" (just those four words) you cannot know what Schumann obviously did: so do not sing the *Dichterliebe*. There is a psychologically interesting inter-thematic association of literary and musical ideas in "Aus meinen Tränen spriessen" and "Ich habe im Traum geweinet".

Schumann: *Overture, Manfred, Op. 115*, and
Gluck: *Dance of the Blessed Spirits (Orpheus, Act 2)*.

NBC Symphony Orchestra, c. Toscanini.

His Master's Voice DB 6992-93. 12s.

An interesting piece that does not live up to the sombre luxuriance of its beginning. The *allegro* is marred by one of Schumann's typically tedious obsessions with an all too obvious rhythmic formula which Toscanini sadistically over-emphasizes without relief. The recording is inclined to be harsh with ample surface glare and glitter: the orchestral performance is literally brilliant: superb phrasing by the cellos. Gluck's spirits dance immaculately.

Haydn: *String Quartet in E flat, Op. 64, No. 8*.

New Italian Quartet.

Decca AK 2159-60. 10s.

A dull performance. The first movement's *allegretto* is too much like the *andante's* *andante* and its strongly contrapuntal development does not develop. The slow movement is played with extraordinary diffidence, the minuet with little precision, and the finale flops.

Honegger: *Sonatine pour Clarinette et Piano*, and
Pierné: *Canzonetta*.

Louis Cahuzac and Folmer Jensen.

Columbia LDX 3. 6s.

Very sour and sorry stuff. The three movements are minorish in mood and all end in the major for no apparent reason. The finale taxes the patience least, lasting as it does just ninety seconds. The Pierné fill-up leaves the disc a void.

Saint-Saëns: *Le Rouet D'Omphale, Op. 31*.

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Beecham.

His Master's Voice DB 6498. 6s.

The material this wheel spins wears pretty thin: those who like inoffensive musical nudity will like this.

Gounod: *La Kermesse, "Vin ou Bière"*.

"O Sainte médaille"; "Le veau d'Or"; "Ne permettez-vous pas"; "Ainsi que la brise" (*Faust, Act 2*).

Soldiers' chorus (Act 4).

Church scene (Act 4).

The Death of Valentine (Act 4).

Rico, Bannerman, Bourdin, Geori-Boué, Saint-Arnaud, Nové, Frank, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and chorus, c. Beecham.

His Master's Voice DB 6964-67. 24s.

This selection from *Faust* is performed with style and vigour. A nasal (if very French) soprano spoils the lovely "Ne permettez-vous pas", but Valentine's death and the *Soldiers' Chorus* are particularly convincing. These eight sides should be enough for all except the most fanatical of Gounod-Fausts amongst us.

Wagner: Isolde's Narrative and Curse (Tristan, Act 1).*

Flagstad, Höngen and the Philharmonia Orchestra, c. Dobrowen, and

"Im Treibhaus".*

"Schmerzen".*

"Träume".*

(Nos. 3, 4 and 5 from *Fünf Gedichte von Mathilde Wesendonck*.)

Flagstad, acc. Gerald Moore.

His Master's Voice B 6748-49: 6842. 18s.

In *Isolde's Narrative* Wagner really solved the problem of combining satisfactorily his lyric impulse and the dramatic necessity for extended recitative: and it is in these protracted recitatives that the absolute logic of the *leitmotiv* becomes apparent. This is a very fine set. If Höngen is rather less than one expected, Flagstad, by way of compensation, is rather more. The orchestral performance and recording are of a high standard although the voices are perhaps a little over-amplified. The *Wesendonck* songs are sung with authenticity and a restraint which befits their stature as *lieder*. "Im Treibhaus" ("In the Hothouse" as the label has it) and "Träume" must always be of special interest as preliminary studies for *Tristan*, but their singular beauty as *lieder* (in spite of the rather un pianistic accompaniments) should not be obscured by cataloguing them as historical curiosities.

D. M.

Beethoven: Concerto No. 5 in E flat. Op. 73.

Clifford Curzon and London Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Szell.

Decca AX 282-6. 30s.

Clifford Curzon is capable of fine performances in this Concerto, and an adequate accompaniment is well within the capacities of the LPO and their distinguished guest conductor. Yet this issue is unsatisfactory; it has serious shortcomings in recording, playing and conducting which more than offset its occasional undeniable beauties.

The recording is inconsistent; passages for strings in high registers are shrill and some *tutti*s do not seem to be captured whole. In the first movement Szell takes the presentation of the second subject so deliberately and noisily that, thereafter, whenever the tune enters, the work seems to come to a full stop and inevitably the movement as a whole drags painfully. Conductor and soloist are not always agreed as to how much holding-in the movement will stand; e.g. at the start of the recapitulation section on side three they are not even together. Also there is some unsteady wood-wind playing, notably at the beginning of side four when the beat seems to have disappeared completely. Most of the faults of the first movement re-appear in the rondo, but the slow movement is very finely played and its quieter aspect suits the recording so that harshnesses apparent elsewhere have disappeared.

Chopin: The twenty-four Preludes. Op. 28.

Moiseiwitsch.

His Master's Voice C 3905-8. 16s.

This set is worth having. The recording is so very much a technical advance on that of the old Cortot issue that no fair comparison is possible. Many of the individual preludes are obtainable in still other performances which may be preferred, accordingly as the reader likes his Chopin. And that is the point. Some much-loved performers offend some listeners, and offend excessively. Others, disliked by many critics, are beloved of monster audiences. We have heard certain lady pianists butcher some of these pieces to rapturous applause and Solomon, on the other hand, re-create their beauties as a matter of routine. Moiseiwitsch's performances will, we prophesy, offend least the smallest number of Chopin lovers, whilst in one or two of the preludes his playing is beyond criticism.

* Strongly recommended.

Prokofiev: March No. 10. Zara Nelsova, and
Masques. Zara Nelsova and Wilfred Parry.
 Decca F 9332. 2s. 9d.

We say without hesitation that a recorded cello has never before sounded more nearly like a real cello than in this instance. Also, the playing technique is brilliant, especially the amazing long *decrecendo* in the *March*. Both these pieces, the first unaccompanied, are arrangements of orchestral matter.

Ponchielli: La Gioconda, Act II, "Stellar del marinai", and
Giordano: Fedora, Act I, Recit.: "Regida e assai la sera"; Aria: "O grande occhi lucente di fede".

Ebe Stignani and Milan Symphony Orchestra, c. Quadri.
 Columbia LX 1253. 6s.

Massenet: Manon, Act II, "En fermant les yeux", and
Puccini: Tosca, Act III, "E lucevan le stelle".

Schock and the Philharmonia Orchestra, c. Süsskind.
 His Master's Voice B 9868. 3s. 3d.

Verdi: Aida, Act I, "Celeste Aida".

Mario Lanza with orchestra c. Gallinicos.
 His Master's Voice DB 6996. 6s.

Respighi: E se un giorno tornasse, and Stornellatrice.

Victoria de los Angeles, acc. Gerald Moore.
 His Master's Voice DA 1930. 4s.

*Brahms: Longing and Cradle Song of the Virgin. Op. 91.**

Kathleen Ferrier and Phyllis Spurr with Max Gilbert, viola.
 Decca K 2289. 5s.

Johann Strauss: Frühlingstimmen, Op. 410.

Erna Berger and the Philharmonia Orchestra, c. Süsskind.
 His Master's Voice DB 6954. 6s.

Of the opera recordings, only the Schock is worth having. In Stignani's version of two very dull arias Columbia have created a degree of orchestral tinniness we had hoped was not possible these days. Mario Lanza has made one of the most vulgar records imaginable. On the other side of *Celeste Aida* is a Neapolitan song by Natile. We thought at first that this choice was made to invite comparison of this powerful young singer's range of abilities with those of Caruso, who could switch from just such *arias* to just such popular tunes and make both sound credible. But the explanation is that Mr. Lanza sings both songs in a Hollywood film; *i.e.* he is one of the nice-looking boys who can sing as well. Schock grasps the musico-dramatic point of *E lucevan le stelle*: it must be a continuous working up to the final bar with no stopping to wipe the figurative tears away as most tenors do. His *Manon* aria is to be preferred to the recent Tagliavini issue, the recording being much superior.

Erna Berger's version of *Frühlingstimmen* is delightfully sung and most excellently played by the Philharmonia Orchestra. It is also well recorded and those with a liking for the matter should hasten to buy a record which will not be bettered for some time.

The Ferrier-Spurr-Gilbert performance of Brahms' two contralto songs—a fine example of vocal chamber music—is sufficiently near perfection for the loveliness to come through and remind us how rarely, in a lifetime, one might hear Op. 91 in the flesh; it seems essential that a record be possessed and this will do until a better comes along. Respighi's two songs with their sparse accompaniment are dry on the palate and, as served us by Victoria de los Angeles, a trifle heady. There is possibly more in the singing, here, than in the songs.

* Strongly recommended.

Adam: Overture—If I were King.

Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra, c. Schwarz.

His Master's Voice C 3945. 4s.

Verdi: Overture—La Forza del Destino.

London Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Solti.

Decca X 298. 6s.

*Schubert: Overture—Rosamunde, and**Mendelssohn: Scherzo from Octet. Op. 20.*

Hallé Orchestra, c. Barbirolli.

His Master's Voice C 3943-44. 8s.

The Hallé Mendelssohn is quite heavenly; but unfortunately the Schubert, on the three other sides, is not acceptable. It is played far too slowly so that nowhere, after the grand opening bars, is any real tension achieved. Adolphe Adam's old favourite gets a very good airing from Bournemouth. In the final *allegro* a huge *crescendo* must be achieved within one bar of *staccato* semiquavers. This is repeated, in a passage which rarely comes off with the bands and ensembles who keep this overture in their repertoire. Here it is done with electrifying effect to wind up a performance of Boston "Prom" standard. There is little to choose between Solti's *Forza del Destino* and the Philharmonia-Markevitch issue which was a coarser recording but a more exciting performance.

Mendelssohn: Concerto in E minor. Op. 64.

Heifetz and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Beecham.

His Master's Voice DB 6956-58. 18s.

Vitali-Respighi: Ciaccona.

Gioconda de Vito and the Philharmonia Orchestra, c. Erede.

His Master's Voice DB 6936-37. 12s.

*Beethoven: Romance No. 1 in G. Op. 40.**

Tibor Varga and the Philharmonia Orchestra, c. Bernard.

Columbia DX 1615. 4s.

The temptation to award a star to the Heifetz-Beecham set is very strong and has been resisted solely on the grounds that Decca have just issued a set in which Campoli is the soloist. Though unable to make a direct comparison we have made a point of hearing this latter and are able to announce that both issues are excellent. They are different; Heifetz performance gives the feeling of perfect textual accuracy allied to a bold grasp of all there is behind the writing. Campoli plays as if, with the gift of first-rate sight reading, he had come across the work for the first time. He plays more leisurely, with *tempi* markedly slower than Heifetz, and appears to be exploring the beauties of the work for himself rather than presenting them to us.

We have no hesitation in giving the strongest recommendation to the Beethoven issue. Varga is a fine violinist in the classical tradition; he makes something fresh and wonderful of Beethoven's little Op. 40.

With *Ciaccona*, Signor Erede has made an unexpected choice for his first recorded excursion into classical music. From the combined output of all Vitalis, Filipo (late sixteenth century), Giovannia Battista (second half of seventeenth century) and Tommaso Antonio (born c. 1665) an extended chaconne for solo violin with figured bass written by Tommaso Antonio is the only work we ever hear. In the present version of it Respighi has provided an interesting and successful accompaniment for strings and organ. Most people will find this music unadventurous. Vitali was not Bach (who always wrote gloriously for solo strings) and even with Respighi's help he does not sound like Bach. But splendidly performed, as here, the piece has many beauties and is worth the excellent recording we are offered.

* Strongly recommended.

Scarlatti: Sonatas in D major (Longo 461) and G minor (Longo 499).

Jacqueline Blancard.

Decca K 2247. 5s.

*Beethoven: Rondo in G, Op. 51, No. 2.**

Denis Matthews.

Columbia DX 1595. 4s.

Chopin: Waltzes: No. 1 in E flat, Op. 18, and No. 14 in E minor, Op. Posth.

Malcuzyński.

Columbia LX 1246. 6s.

The "Cat's Fugue" (G minor) and its companion in D major, a livelier and more attractive, though less well known sonata, are each admirably played and Miss Blancard's piano sounds credible. Malcuzyński's piano, on the other hand, is gloriously recorded; few issues can compare with this pair of Waltzes for piano reproduction. Unhappily, we cannot recommend the performance unreservedly. No. 14 is played finely; but a beautiful performance of No. 1 is spoilt by the uncalled-for ferocity with which the opening chords of the fourth section are attacked. The effect achieved is something like that of the celebrated passage in the *Surprise* Symphony.

Denis Matthews' performance of the second half of Opus 51 is exquisite. The same pianist should be asked to record the rondo in C of the same opus, the only available recording of which is the fill-up on Schnabel's old record of Beethoven's C minor Concerto.

Puccini: Gianni Schicchi, "Oh mio babbino caro", and

Turandot, Act III, "Tu chi di gel sei cinta".

E. Schwarzkopf and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Karajan.

Columbia LB 85. 4s.

Donizetti: La Favorita, Act III, "Leonore 'ei del suo cor la brama", and

Massenet: Il Re de Lahore, Act IV, "Le barbare tribù".

Silveri and the London Symphony Orchestra, c. Stanford Robinson.

Columbia LX 1240. 6s.

Johann Strauss: Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald, and

Joseph Strauss: Dorfschwalben aus Österreich.

Erna Sack and orchestra, c. Reinshagen.

Decca K 2270. 5s.

Verdi: Rigoletto, Act II, "Tutti le festa al tempio", and

Donizetti: L'Elisir d'Amore, Act II, "Prendi; prendi, per me sei libero".

Carosio and orchestra, c. Erede.

His Master's Voice DB 6867. 6s.

The vocal waltzes of the Strauss brothers are nastily, brassily recorded. In the Puccini record Miss Schwarzkopf's lovely voice is well reproduced. Largely as a result of singing Lauretta's aria too slowly, she gets much more pathos into "Beloved Daddy" than the entirely light-hearted operatic situation calls for. Silveri is in excellent voice; a vibratory effect in the recording of his loud, dramatic outbursts detracts from the Donizetti performance though the reverse side of the review record was free of this fault.

The Carosio-Erede record is an excellent product of true operatic professionalism, Italian style. "Prendi, prendi" is, incidentally, a lovely example of the *apparent* artlessness of Donizetti's art, and serves well for playing to people who dismiss him too lightly.

J. B.

* Strongly recommended.

Correspondence

19, Ennerdale Road,
Kew Gardens, Surrey.
16th February, 1950.

PONS ASINORUM?

To the Editor of THE MUSIC REVIEW.

SIR,—Mr. Meyerstein seems somewhat perturbed. He cannot trace my first Sonata. It is published by Durand. In Volume three, Number three, of THE MUSIC REVIEW, there is a review of the work (signed M.C.). Perhaps, if the gentleman in question would take the trouble to read THE MUSIC REVIEW in future, it might save him further abortive travels to the British Museum. Possibly Rowley is not the only ass.

Yours faithfully,
ALEC ROWLEY.

[Of course Rowley is not the only ass! And MR is most appreciative of his good humour. (Ed.)]

52, Darrick Wood Road,
Orpington, Kent.
16th February, 1950.

VERDI'S CHARACTER

To the Editor of THE MUSIC REVIEW.

SIR,—Why did I pass over Mr. Klein's references to Verdi's treatment of Catalani? Because I had no real quarrel with them. The subject, moreover, is too complicated for discussion in the correspondence pages of THE MUSIC REVIEW. But the much less temperately expressed remarks in Mr. Klein's letter call for some reply. Mr. Klein has evidently just discovered the existence of Vols. 3 and 4 of the *Carteggi Verdiani*, published in 1947. When he has had time to study them more thoroughly he will find that the authenticity of the letters he now quotes has been called in question by Alessandro Luzio, editor of the *Carteggi*. I have not been able to make up my mind whether Luzio was really justified in this or not, but at any rate no public reply to his challenge, which first appeared in the *Corriere della Sera* of 26th January, 1941, has ever been made. But Mr. Klein should note one thing: if these letters are genuine they contain Verdi's explicit denial of one of the main charges against him:

"They say I wage war on Catalani, putting pressure on Signor Giulio [Ricordi] not to publish the works, or to prevent the sale and hire of them. Stories! I have other things to do than occupy myself with the *maestrino lucchese*, who doesn't disturb my sleep."

The only other point that I think might profitably be discussed further concerns Verdi and Bizet. Mr. Klein asks: "Did not Verdi write to Giulio Ricordi during the rehearsals of *Falstaff*: 'The singers must not sing the music of *Falstaff* as they do such ancient comic (farical) operas ("opere buffe antiche") as *Carmen* (!), *Don Pasquale* or even *The Secret Marriage*?'"

The passage of which this purports to be a translation comes from the *Carteggi*, Vol. IV, p. 215: "La musica non è difficile, ma bisogna cantarla diversamente dalle altre opere comiche moderne, e nemmeno come le opere buffe antiche [Mi direte che queste sono pretese che vanno un po' al di là. Io non ho pretesa alcuna, ma è certo che *Falstaff* non bisogna cantarlo] come la *Carmen* e come il *Don Pasquale* e neanche come il *Matrimonio segreto*."

This is taken from a rough draft of a letter preserved at Sant'Agata; the passage within brackets is cancelled. We do not know what Verdi actually sent to Ricordi, as the letter itself has not been published. All we have is this rough draft.

It is evident that in the first place there must have been a full stop after the word "antiche". This would be my attempt at a translation:

"The music is not difficult, but it must be sung differently from the other modern comic operas, and not like the old *opere buffe* either. You will say that these are pretensions that go a bit too far. I have no pretensions at all, but it is certain that *Falstaff* must not be sung] like *Carmen* and like *Don Pasquale* and not even like *Il matrimonio segreto*."

Now Verdi had lived a long time in Paris—much longer than is usually realized—and would fully understand that *Carmen*, with its spoken dialogues, came within the category of *opéra comique*. This was perhaps why he used the terms "opere comiche moderne" and "opere buffe antiche". But the passage is certainly confused, in this rough draft.

Look again, however, at what Mr. Klein makes of it:

"The singers must not sing the music of *Falstaff* as they do such ancient comic operas as *Carmen*, *Don Pasquale*, or even *The Secret Marriage*."

The reference to "opere comiche moderne", which alone justifies the reference to *Carmen*, is omitted altogether! Verdi is made to talk nonsense.

Is it "pedantry" on my part to point this out? Is this another "unimportant detail"? I do not think so. It is by an accumulation of similar misinterpretations of Verdi's words that Mr. Klein builds up his whole case. I still await the evidence that Verdi resented Bizet's success.

Yours faithfully,

FRANK WALKER.

2, Crescent Road,
Wimbledon, S.W.20.
28th February, 1950.

To the Editor of THE MUSIC REVIEW.

SIR,—I am glad to see that Mr. Walker does not attempt to deny the truth of most of the arguments brought forward in my last letter, and that, contrary to his previous statements depicting me unjustifiably as a calumniator of Verdi, he agrees with my references to the great composer's harsh treatment of his gifted contemporary, Alfredo Catalani. I am, however, at a loss to understand Mr. Walker's sarcastic remark that I have evidently just discovered the last two volumes of the *Carteggi Verdiani*. Am I to draw the unfavourable conclusion that he had been hoping that lack of knowledge on my part of the latest research work might prevent me from demolishing his case with regard to a comment of mine that he had unwarrantably denounced as "unforgivable"?

I also note that Mr. Walker has not been able to make up his mind concerning the authenticity of Verdi's letters about Catalani, though I should have imagined that the author of a book on *The Man Verdi* would have gone to the trouble of investigating thoroughly and intelligently so important a matter, and one affecting so vitally our final estimate of Verdi's character.

To me it appears obvious that the letters are genuine. They fit in perfectly with everything we know about Verdi's attitude towards Catalani. As a matter of fact, their contents were known many years before they were published, and in an article in *Music and Letters*, as far back as *January*, 1934 (kindly note, Mr. Walker), I referred to one or two of the chief points mentioned in the letters. The style is, moreover, unmistakable. Besides, who on earth would have stooped to blacken a national idol forty years after his death by deliberately concocting such churlish and ungenerous letters?

Mr. Walker refers to a public challenge by Alessandro Luzio, calling in question the authenticity of the letters. In the *Carteggi Verdiani* (Volume IV, page 94) Signor Luzio does, indeed, state that he has written about the letters in the *Corriere della Sera* in January, 1926. No such letter, however, appeared in that paper in 1926, and Signor Luzio's inaccuracy is accompanied by an exceptionally lame attempt, in a chapter that is anything but lucid, to suggest that the letters might be forgeries. But is it likely that Signor Carlo Belviglieri, who introduced the letters to the public, would have lent himself to so base and aimless a deception? Besides, if Signor Luzio published a challenge in January, 1941, is it altogether surprising (as Mr. Walker appears to believe) that no public reply was forthcoming? At that time Italy was facing disaster both in Greece and Africa, and artistic matters were swept aside. I must admit that I find it strange that a critic of Signor Luzio's reputation should hint at fanciful stories in order to safeguard the reputation of a composer who is surely far too great to need such unavailing efforts to whitewash him at any cost. But then (in 1947!) Signor Luzio quotes with approval the idiotic comment of a critic who compares the Verdi-Wagner hegemony in the operatic theatres of the whole world to—the Rome-Berlin Axis! Surely post-war publications of the vast cultural importance of the *Carteggi Verdiani* should be brought up to date, all errors rectified and such absurdities eliminated.

Mr. Walker, to my surprise, condescends to quote from the letters (the authenticity of which he questions) *when it suits his purpose*. He declares that the letters contain Verdi's explicit denial of one of the main charges against him: namely, that he had endeavoured to influence Ricordi against publishing his young rival's works. Mr. Walker conveniently—and, I regret to say, *characteristically*—ignores one of Verdi's most significant references to Catalani. Here it is: "Me ne ha parlato Ricordi, il quale s'è intestato a pubblicarne le opere, ma non credo con vantaggio". This is my translation: "Ricordi has spoken to me of him (Catalani); he (Ricordi) has *obstinately* decided to publish his operas, which, I believe, will not be to his advantage".

Surely even Mr. Walker must realize that Verdi had obviously been using his powerful influence with Ricordi to the detriment of Catalani. I am not suggesting that Verdi was influenced by a base motive: he was in this case simply blind, as some of the greatest artists have been. Did not Wagner refer scornfully to "Donizetti and Co."? (the "and Co." including no less a person than Verdi himself).

With regard to Verdi's contemptuous reference to *Carmen*, I wish at the very outset to state that if I quoted every extract from Verdi's correspondence *in full*, my letters would be twice as long as they already are, to your dismay, Sir, I am sure. Occasionally I may have abbreviated a passage, omitting what was obviously beside the point, but I have certainly not misinterpreted Verdi's meaning, as Mr. Walker would have you believe.

Mr. Walker starts by quoting the passage in full in Italian, and then he translates it, it seems to me, clumsily and tendentiously, inserting an extremely problematical full stop of his own.

Complacently he remarks that "it is evident that in the first place there must have been a full stop after the word 'antiche'". There happens to be *no* such full stop, so how can it be *evident*? This, Mr. Walker, is not criticism; but mere irresponsible guesswork masquerading as such.

Mr. Walker remarks that the extract is confusing, but he contrives to render it even more so, not merely by inserting a full stop in an unlikely place, but also by interpolating a passage that Verdi had deliberately cancelled. The extract is, in fact, simple enough, if *properly* translated. It should run as follows: "The music is not difficult, but it must be sung differently from the other modern comic operas, and *not even* like such ancient farcical operas as *Carmen*, *Don Pasquale* and even *Il Matrimonio Segreto*"—as a matter of fact, essentially what I said in my previous letter.

Mr. Walker proceeds to inform us that *Carmen*, with its spoken dialogues, comes within the category of *opéra comique*. But surely it is absurd to translate so technical and peculiarly French a term by *opera comica* or *comic opera*. Mr. Walker writes as though Verdi were a Frenchman, instead of an Italian writing to another Italian in Italian! In Italy *Carmen* was *never* performed with the spoken dialogue; it was *never* regarded as a comic opera. To refer to *Carmen* as a "comic opera" (whether modern or ancient is, moreover, fundamentally immaterial) and to rank it with *Don Pasquale* and *Il Matrimonio Segreto* was just a bit of savage fun on Verdi's part at the expense of a tragic masterpiece that had nothing in common with either of them. It is strange that Mr. Walker should fail to see this, but in order to bolster up an untenable theory he goes even further: he makes so clear a thinker as Verdi write ungrammatically!

Mr. Walker then exclaims indignantly, but surely somewhat naïvely: "Verdi is made to talk nonsense". Does he think that Verdi never spoke nonsense? Of course he did occasionally, as we all do. He had enough sense of humour to admit it, for he was no prig, and never set himself up as infallible, as some undiscerning and extremely fallible critics are continually in the habit of doing. Mr. Walker seems to me to have completely failed to enter into the mind of Verdi. He imagines Verdi is serious when he is savagely ironical; and ironical or jocular when he is bitter or serious (as in his reference to Goldmark—a point in my last letter which Mr. Walker conveniently ignored). But Mr. Walker never has the grace to admit his own errors—these, according to him, are merely points that cannot be "profitably" discussed! He has consequently not succeeded in demolishing the case I have built up, but only in rectifying one or two insignificant details that do not affect the main issue one way or the other.

In conclusion, may I state that fellow-workers in the same field should endeavour to assist each other and ought not to adopt the self-righteous, hectoring tone (which reminded me at times of a certain critic in Wagner's *Meistersinger*) that Mr. Walker thought fit to assume towards me in his first letter (containing, moreover, a cancelled passage of great offensiveness which he obviously intended me to read). It is difficult to preserve one's calm and objectivity when one is treated without even elementary courtesy.

With regard to Verdi, he is surely great enough to be able to stand a little criticism, and he certainly does not need to be defended by over-zealous champions who transform him into a ridiculously unreal plaster saint. I believe that the time has come for a dispassionate psychological analysis of this remarkable and complex figure. Verdi, himself, I am sure, would exclaim—like Cromwell: "Paint me as I am—warts and all!"

Yours faithfully,

JOHN W. KLEIN.

[This correspondence is now closed. (ED.)]

Music Survey,

Oakfield School,

West Dulwich, S.E.21.

21st March, 1950.

QUIS CUSTODIET?

To the Editor of THE MUSIC REVIEW.

SIR,—Obviously Mr. Robert Simpson's review of Schönberg's *Theme and Variations*, Op. 43a (MR, XI/1/50, p. 67), is "the result of [his] failure to grasp [Schönberg's] artistic aims". What to Mr. Simpson's ears are "arbitrary note-patterns" is music to ours. The proposition that Schönberg's methods of composition "defy the acoustic relationships of sound" is strictly and provably meaningless. We fail to understand how one of this country's most capable writers on music, and indeed one of our own most valued contributors, can consider himself competent to review music which, on his own admission, he does not understand, and how you, Sir, could see your way clear to print the outcome of his bewilderment.

Yours faithfully,

DONALD MITCHELL,
HANS KELLER,

Editors.

ROBERT DONINGTON,
Editorial Board.

[Contributors to MR do not necessarily have to be, nor even to masquerade as knowalls. (ED.)]

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